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CHURCH POLITY.

A TREATISE

ON

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

AND

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

BY

HENRY J. RIPLEY,

LATE PROFESSOR OF SACRED RHETORIC AND PASTORAL DUTIES, IN NEWTON THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION, AND AUTHOR OF NOTES ON THE GOSPELS, THE ACTS, ETC.

BOSTON:
GRAVES & YOUNG.
1867.

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CHURCH HISTORY.

CHRISTIAN [illegible]

OF

THE [illegible]

BY

[illegible]

LATE PROFESSOR OF SACRED HISTORY AND [illegible]
IN THE NEWTON THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION
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TO THE PAST AND PRESENT MEMBERS

OF THE

NEWTON THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION,

THIS VOLUME, AS AN EXPRESSION OF ITS AUTHOR'S FRATERNAL INTEREST IN THEIR USEFULNESS AND WELFARE,

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

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PREFACE.

It is the aim of this volume, as it was of the Lectures to theological students, in which it originated, to present the scriptural view of the subject of which it treats.

It does not propose to advocate certain ecclesiastical usages, or to expound the church-polity of any particular denomination of Christians. If its views are more in harmony with those of any one denomination than of another, this can be traced to a better source than to any predilection which its author may be supposed to have for a certain part of the Christian brotherhood. It would, however, be idle in him to profess an entire exemption from such a bias; for, however candid any one may endeavor to be, he may be unconsciously influenced by pre-possession.

It may be thought a deficiency, that this volume ignores, to so great an extent, the existence of variant denominations of Christians. This, however, results

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from the main idea of the work; namely, the scriptural, or New Testament, view of the subject, as is shown in the Introduction. Yet it was hardly possible, in treating some topics, wholly to avoid mentioning denominations, or very distinctly alluding to their sentiments and usages.

On the same ground, objections against any existing modes of conducting church-affairs were deemed unnecessary. They are, for the most part, quite unprofitable; for almost everything is open to some objection. It is, generally, best to present positive views of a subject, when such are attainable, with their proper accompaniments and modifications, and leave them to their legitimate influence in gaining sway.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN examining the Scriptures on the topics embraced by Church Polity, we shall not find such copiousness of information and definiteness of statement, as even a reasonable curiosity might desire. Matters of organization and business detail were not held, in the apostles' times, of so much importance, comparatively, as to secure full and particular information respecting them. We are restricted to the meagre historic records in the New Testament, and to its incidental notices of business-transactions, as the materials for our conclusions. Some of the historic notices are so brief, as to be justly liable to variety of interpretation; and yet, a comparison of such notices with more detailed accounts, either of the same, or of similar, affairs, may lead us to a satisfactory conclusion as to their proper meaning, and may render various notices mutually harmonious. The accounts which we possess are,

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when viewed conjointly, and especially when viewed in the light of a true idea of a church, sufficient in number and particularity of detail, to inform us respecting the two branches of Church Polity; in other words, to teach us the principles on which the formation, government, and business action of the earliest churches proceeded, and to teach us the duties, powers, and relations of the Christian ministry. The principles which appear to have regulated, at the earliest times, these two constituents of Church Polity, are but few: a correct apprehension of them, however, and of their mutual connections and necessary consequences is sufficient to guide the people of Christ.

The New Testament furnishes us with the requisite materials for a system; so that we can ascertain, with a good degree of completeness, what may be called the *normal* state of a Christian church.

As so many diverse modes of organization and action now exist, and the most honest inquirer may be reasonably perplexed in regard to their conflicting claims, the *normal* state of a Christian church, if it can be ascertained, would enable us to judge respecting the authority, or propriety, of those diverse modes, and relieve us from the necessity of entering into con-

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troversy respecting any of them. A correct view of the normal state would, also, prepare us to dispose, in as wise a manner as possible, of some practical questions which originate from those diverse modes, and which require even the normal state to put itself into a somewhat questionable attitude, when the purpose is to act in a spirit of accommodation to the abnormal states which have come into being. Such a view would also convince us that various questions, occasioned by departures from the normal state, must not expect a perfectly satisfactory answer; but that, as matters are now situated in Christendom, it will be necessary on some occasions to select a course which appears on the whole the most *expedient:* that is, the course which interferes the least with acknowledged scriptural principles, since any course which may be taken will involve some interference with such principles.

The aim, therefore, of this work is, to obtain a view of the normal state of Christian churches, by considering scriptural statements and the necessary deductions from them, without paying particular regard to the views and practices of any denomination of Christians. Consequently, it does not directly controvert any exist-

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ing modes of church organization and government which yet may be at variance with the original mode; nor does it attempt to answer questions that may arise from the abnormal states which have become established.

In accordance with its aim, it does not furnish directions for matters of church business: yet it could hardly be otherwise than that, on some of the topics introduced, modes of action would be indicated.

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PART FIRST.

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

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CHURCH POLITY.

PART FIRST. — CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

CHAPTER I.

SCRIPTURAL IDEA OF A CHURCH.

§ *Importance of this topic.* — In investigating the constitution, government, and appropriate sphere of churches, the scriptural idea of a church, or rather the idea as presented in the New Testament, is a topic of primary importance. The view taken of a church, will, of necessity, influence to a great extent our views of the nature and sphere of church-action and of the nature and duties of the ministerial office.

The church-history of the first three centuries shows how vitally important is a correct view of a Christian church as to its membership and design, and of the ordinances of Christianity as related to church-mem-

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bership. The externalism which marked the great body of professed Christians, not long after the apostolic age, was largely due to erroneous views of the nature, design and province of a church, since correct views of these involve correct views of Christianity itself. Departures from the purity and simplicity of apostolic practice on these points had a disastrous influence on questions pertaining directly to personal salvation, and thus sapped the foundations of genuine godliness. Had apostolic purity and simplicity, as to the nature of a Christian church and as to connection with it, been retained among those who, after the Apostles' times, became teachers and guides in the Christian community, a strong, and, we may believe, effectual guard would have defended the doctrines of regeneration by the Holy Spirit and justification by faith in Christ. But when the opinion had become rooted, that external union with the church is the medium of union with Christ as the Head of the Church, and consequently, since this union with the church was effected by baptism, that baptism is essential to salvation; this unscriptural view of the nature and design of a church, — making things primary which are only secondary, making form antecedent,

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and essential, to spirit, dissevering the natural connection of fountain and stream, — this unscriptural view opened the door for all sorts of corruption.

The experience of the apostolic age and of all subsequent ages goes to sustain the importance of properly guarding church-membership: in other words, of forming and maintaining a scriptural idea of a Christian church.

Without purposing to examine the controversies which have divided Christians on the subject of this chapter, let it suffice merely to exhibit the results to which an examination of the Scriptures conducts.

§ *A difficulty at the outset of the inquiry.* — At entering on this subject, we encounter in the present day a difficulty arising from the numerous divisions among the professed followers of Christ. The word *church* is often used in ordinary writings and conversation with the same meaning as the word *denomination*, signifying the collective body of those who unite in certain religious opinions and practices; as for instance, the Episcopal church, the Presbyterian church, the Methodist church. The term *Baptist church* is

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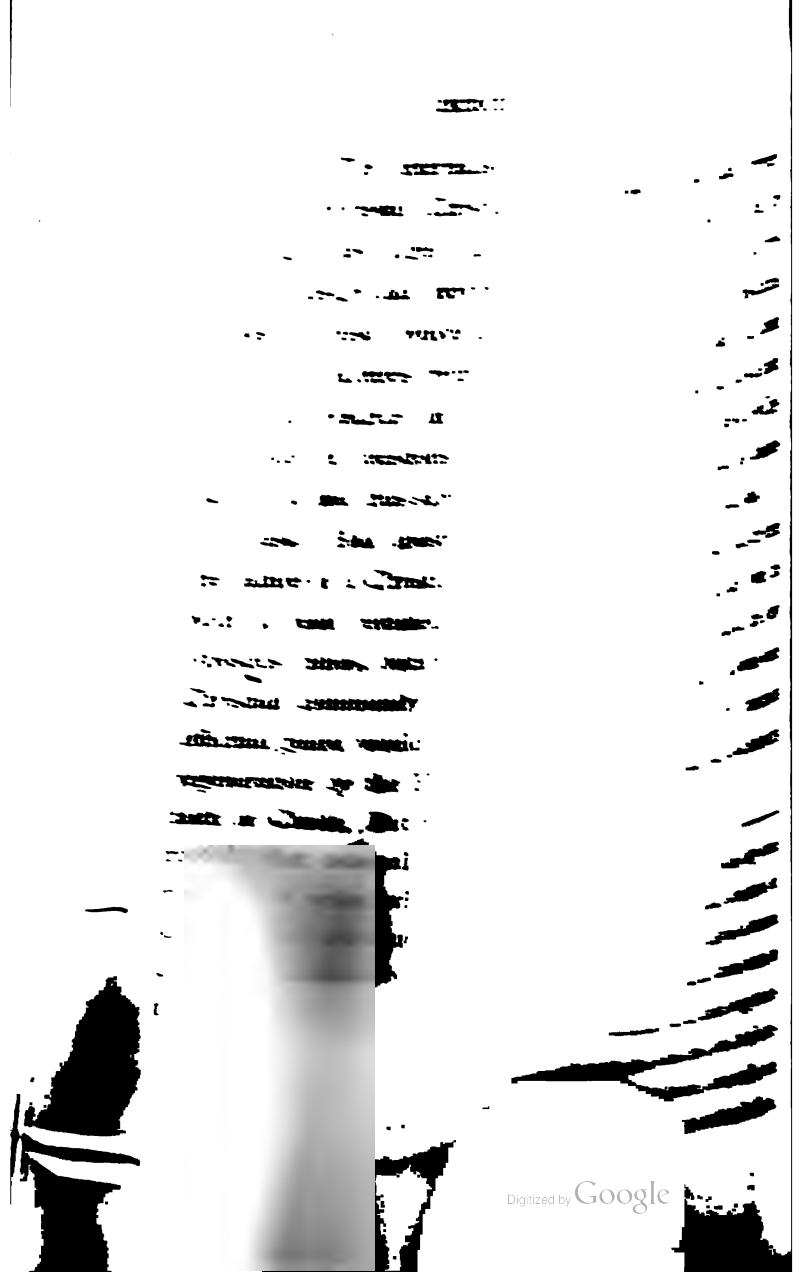
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to our word *assembly*, or *con-*

ng *to call*, and a preposition, *out of*.

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also sometimes used in the same manner; improperly, however, and not often by persons who belong to the denomination thus designated and who rightly apprehend its distinctive principles; since Baptist churches are not united together by adherence to any human ecclesiastical body. This remark might also be made concerning the Congregational churches in New England; for they are individually distinct and independent, not holding allegiance to any central body.*

A use of the word thus synonymous with the term *denomination* has, of course, no authority from the Scriptures; for in the age when the books of the New Testament were written the Saviour's followers were not divided into such sections, and the principles which are involved in such divisions were not subjects of controversy.

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* If the Congregational churches may be thought by some to pay an undue deference to certain human standards of church polity and doctrine, and to accord a degree of control to such standards, and thus to have impaired their claim to independency, it should be remembered that these very standards distinctly recognize the separate existence and the independence of these churches; and that these standards are regarded rather as venerable documents, than as authoritative.

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In considering the question before us, we must transport ourselves back to the very earliest age of Christianity, and endeavor to place ourselves in the position of those individuals and communities who enjoyed the presence and labors of the Apostles, and to whom the Apostles wrote; just as we ought in investigating any religious subject which depends on the Scriptures.

§ *Threefold signification of the word church in the New Testament.* — An examination of the New Testament use of the original word translated *church*, will result in affixing to it a threefold signification.

Its use throughout, it may be well to remark, involves the idea conveyed by its two etymological elements,† namely, *to call out of*, or *from*, to *summon;* and as a collection of people *called out from* among their fellow-citizens, or the whole body of citizens *called out* to one place, *summoned together*, compose an assembly, so the idea, variously modified, of an assembly, is inherent in the word.

Its threefold signification may be conveniently exhibited as follows:

§ 1. It is equivalent to our word *assembly*, or *con-*

† A Greek verb meaning *to call*, and a preposition, *out of*.

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gregation; and the assembly thus denoted may be a civil or a religious one, an orderly or a disorderly one. It is used in this general sense in Acts vii. 38, "This is he that was in the church in the wilderness." Here the entire people of the Hebrews assembled, congregated, in the Arabian desert, are spoken of.

In Hebrews ii. 12, "In the midst of the *church* will I sing praise unto thee" — the term is also equivalent to *assembly*, or *congregation*, as appears from comparing this verse with Psalm xxii. 22, "In the midst of the *congregation* will I praise thee." The clause in the epistle to the Hebrews is a verbal quotation from the Septuagint Greek translation of the original Hebrew verse.

In Acts xix. 32, 39, 41, the original term elsewhere translated *church* is used in application to the tumultuous assemblage of the idolatrous Ephesians, and is properly translated, in our version, *assembly*. The original word, it is clear from these verses, might designate an assembly however convened, whether in an orderly and legal manner, or tumultuously.

In this sense, too, the word is used when mention is made of a church in a certain man's house. See Rom. xvi. 5, 1. Cor. xvi. 19, Col. iv. 15, Philemon, 2.

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In the first two of these passages, the context and the circumstances of the case make it highly probable that the term designated a company, larger or smaller, of Christians who were in the habit of assembling for religious instruction and worship at such a house, it being applicable to a company, large or small; and hence, to the entire Christian company in a city or to a portion of it. Thus in 1 Cor. xvi. 19, 20, after the mention of Aquila and Priscilla and the *church* in their house, *all* the brethren, probably the church as a body, are mentioned. So in Rom. xvi. 5, mention is made of the church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, just as in 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Both at Rome, then, where Priscilla and Aquila, were when the epistle was sent to the Romans, and at Ephesus where they were when Paul sent from that city (1 Cor. xvi. 8.) their salutations to the Corinthians, they had a church in their house. It would seem, that as business called them from city to city, they were in the habit of holding religious meetings; and the company which usually repaired to their houses for worship were meant in these salutations.

This explanation may be proper for the other two passages in which this phrase occurs; though in these

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it is not accompanied with such a statement of circumstances as to suggest any explanation.*

In the life of Justin Martyr † was an incident which illustrates this case. When under examination by the Roman prefect, Justin was asked where the Christians assembled. He replied, 'Not in any one place; but wherever they are able, or inclined, to meet; and if any chose to come to me I communicated to him the words of truth.' It seems to have been his practice, during his temporary sojourn in cities, to receive, as a Christian philosopher, companies for religious instruction and worship. Such companies would be, according to the Scriptural mode of speaking, churches in Justin's house.

§ 2. The word *church* designates a particular assembly of believers in Christ associated together as his disciples; that is, in ordinary phrase, some particular church, as, for instance, the church in Ephesus, or in Corinth. This is its most usual signification in the

*For the view presented in the above paragraph, I am indebted to Neander's Church History. See Torrey's Translation, Vol. I, page 290.

†Acta Martyrii S. Justini et Sociorum. § 3.

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New Testament. See as instances 1 Cor. i. 2, "The church of God which is in Corinth;" 1 Thess. i. 1, "The church of the Thessalonians;" Acts viii. 1, and xi. 22, "The church which was at Jerusalem."

In this sense the word is used in the plural number; as in Acts ix. 31, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria." So in Acts xv. 41, Paul is spoken of as travelling through Syria and Cilicia, "confirming the churches," the various bodies of believers that had been formed in those provinces. In writing also to the Galatian believers, as Galatia was a province in which were several bodies of believers, he addressed his epistle to "the churches in Galatia." Gal. i. 2. In like manner we read of "the churches of Asia," 1 Cor. xvi. 19, "the churches of Macedonia," 2 Cor. viii. 1, "the churches of the Gentiles," Rom. xvi. 4; and "all the churches," 1 Cor. vii. 17. The equivalent expression, "in every church," occurs, also, in 1 Cor. 4. 17, and in 1 Cor. xiv. 23, the phrase "the whole church," is applied to a particular community of Christians.

§ 3. It designates the followers of Christ viewed *collectively*, as separate from the world in religious

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respects, and united among themselves by faith in Christ and the hope of salvation.

This collective sense of the word is sometimes applied to the visible body of Christ's followers, that is, to the professed followers of Christ, as a whole; though more frequently to the truly spiritual disciples of Christ, viewed collectively as sustaining a common relation to Christ, their spiritual head.

In this collective meaning as applied to the *visible* company of Christ's followers, it occurs in 1 Cor. xii. 28, "God hath set some in the church." In the same sense, the apostle speaks of himself in 1 Cor. xv. 9, and Gal. i. 13, as having "persecuted the church of God." So in Rom. xvi. 23, he speaks of Gaius as "host of the whole church;" that is, of Christians in general, of all bearing the Christian name, to whom, coming from various quarters, he had opportunities of showing hospitality. In 1 Tim. iii. 15, also, "the church of the living God" is the wide-spread community in which the service of Timothy was to be rendered.

In this collective sense and with reference to *spiritual* union with Christ, the word is used in Eph. i. 22, where Christ is called "the head over all things to

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the church which is his body." The same idea is dwelt on by the apostle in the fifth chapter of this epistle, and the word is used repeatedly with the same signification in verses 23–32, "Christ is the head of the church; the church is subject unto Christ; Christ loved the church."

The connection in which the word stands, will generally decide whether the visible community of professed Christians is intended, or the company of genuine followers of Christ, his spiritual body.

§ *The first and the third of these significations not included in the scope of this work.* — With the word as used in the first of these three significations, we are not at present concerned. The third may also be laid aside, because it contemplates the followers of Christ without reference to any external organization, but according to the mental conception of an indefinitely large company avowing subjection to Christ.

§ *The idea of a general church-organization not found in the New Testament.* — It may be well, at this point, to remark that the idea of an organized general church, composed of, or embracing in its or-

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ganization and government, or representing, many separate, or individual, churches, does not occur in the New Testament. Neither the idea of a *provincial* church, embracing all the individual churches in a province united and represented by a select body of men, however appointed, having ecclesiastical authority over the province, a synod for instance; nor that of a *national* church, similarly viewed as embracing all the individual churches in a nation, and similarly represented by a certain body of men, or by a certain man, the king, perhaps, of the nation; nor that of a church *universal*, combining all the churches in the world, and represented by a body of men, as a council of cardinals, or by one man, as the pope; neither of these ideas finds a parallel, or receives countenance, in the New Testament.

The current use of the term *church* in the New Testament relates to the individual, separate bodies of Christians, each of which is treated as in itself a complete church.

§ *What is a church?* — We are, then, in seeking the scriptural idea of a church, limited to the second of the three senses in which the term occurs; and the

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inquiry arises, What was the body which is denominated in the New Testament a church? What, for instance, was the body which was called the church in Jerusalem, or in Antioch, or in Ephesus?

An accurate and complete idea of a church, derived from the specimens in the New Testament, may be expressed in the following description: A Christian church is an association of believers in Christ, who have been baptized on a profession of their faith in him, and who, by their voluntary consent, yet in subjection to the will of Christ, whose authority each member acknowledges, have united for the observance and maintenance of the Christian religion, their mutual spiritual benefit, and the extension of the gospel as a converting and saving power.

If we seek for a brief definition, the following is, perhaps, as free from liability to exception as can be expected: A Christian church is an association of believers in Christ for the observance, the maintenance, and the extension of the Christian religion.

In attempting, however, to express in words the New Testament conception of a church, such a description as is above given, is preferable to any definition: for, however true a definition may be, as under-

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stood by one who frames or adopts it, it is capable of being variously understood, according to a person's own views of any items mentioned in it. Take, for instance, the nineteenth article in the creed of the English Episcopal Church, in the following words: "The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance." Here the statement concerning the sacraments is strictly correct; but as diverse views are held in regard to what is the due administration of the sacraments, and what is Christ's ordinance respecting them, this definition can never show whether a church is to consist of avowed believers only, or may also comprise other persons; or rather, whether the sacraments are to be administered to believers only, or also to others.*

* The framers of the English Episcopal creed, as well as those of other creeds of a nearly contemporaneous date, introduced in this article the mention of the preaching of the word of God and the administration of the sacraments, in order, as is represented by a very intelligent writer in the CHRISTIAN REVIEW, Vol. xvii, pp. 59, 60, to avoid the inference naturally flowing from the first item in the definition

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§ *Items in the description examined.* — Let us now return to the description, and examine its several items.

1. The persons composing a church are believers in Christ.

When we transport ourselves back to the origin, and earliest history of the Christian religion, a different view is evidently preposterous.

The terms in the opening passages of the epistles to churches, descriptive of members, require the statement in this item. In Romans i. 7, the persons addressed are "beloved of God, called to be saints;" in 1 Cor. i. 2, "the church of God, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints;" in Eph. i. 1, "the saints, . . . and the faithful in Christ Jesus;" in Phil. i. 1, "saints in Christ Jesus;" in Col. i. 2, "saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus." Compare, also, for

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that none but believers [faithful men] are to be held members of a church, and to confirm the idea that the distinguishing marks of a church of Christ, are the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments; so that if these last are found in a community, they are sufficient to denominate it a church of Christ, irrespectively of the spiritual qualifications for membership.

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terms of much particularity and discrimination, 1 Thess. i. 2–5, and 2 Thess. i. 3, 4.

Again, the gospel at the very first, required all to become personally followers of Christ: no others, of course, could be held suitable for connection with a church of Christ.

Moreover, faith in Christ is the distinctive principle of the Christian religion. Those who in any place, at first became united as a church, or subsequently connected themselves with it, did so as having become believers in Christ, as being no longer adherents to any pagan religion, or to the religion of Moses when that was viewed distinctively from the religion of Christ. They were distinctively *Christians*.

2. They have been baptized on a profession of faith in Christ.

Baptism in the name of Christ was enjoined on all who received his religion. It was the public act which designated them as Christians; and without this a person would not, originally, be taken for a follower of Christ.

More particularly, our Lord's commission to his apostles, as given in Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, and in Mark xvi. 15, 16, enjoined the duty of baptizing those who should embrace his religion.

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The apostles, in accordance with their commission, baptized those who received their teachings. See Acts ii. 41 ; x. 47, 48 ; xvi. 14, 15, 31–34, xviii. 8. The strict regard which they paid to this part of their commission, as well as to the duty of teaching the distinctive principles of their Lord's religion, is specially manifest in Acts xix. 1–5, which passage relates that, on the occasion of the apostle Paul's meeting with certain disciples whom he could not recognize as duly baptized, he at once made provision for their receiving the Christian ordinance.

The epistles, also, addressed to primitive church-members make distinct mention of their having been baptized as believers in Christ. See Rom. vi. 3, 4 ; Gal. iii. 27 ; Col. ii. 11, 12 ; 1 Pet. iii. 21.

3. They are associated together for the observance and maintenance of the Christian religion, their mutual spiritual benefit, and the extension of the gospel.

This is evident from the record in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles concerning the primitive Christians in Jerusalem ; also, from the conduct of the apostles and other leaders of the churches as described in the Acts generally ; and from the familiar comparison, in Rom. xii. 4, 6 ; 1 Cor. xii. Eph. ii.

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20–22; iv. 11–16, of associated Christian believers to a body, all the members of which act harmoniously for mutual personal benefit, for the general good of the body, and for efficient activity in extending beyond its own limits the knowledge and influence of the Christian religion.

4. Union with a church was voluntary, yet in obedience to the will of Christ.

The voluntary character of this union is an evident result from the first and third of these items. Besides, compulsion is abhorrent to the spirit of the religion, and was utterly incompatible with the circumstances of its early times. No compulsion to embrace and profess it could exist, but that of conscientious conviction, and of decided attachment to Christ.*

§ *Neither removal of any of these particulars nor addition to them.* — None of the particulars comprised in the description can be removed from it, without so far detracting from the scriptural idea of a Christian church. Thus, if the requisition of being believers

* The proof of its being the Saviour's will that believers should thus associate, and consequently, that their voluntary consent to this union is in subordination to his will, is reserved for chapter IV.

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in Christ be removed, the body called a church is, or is inevitably liable to become, essentially defective. If the fact of having been baptized on a profession of faith in Christ be removed, there is a defect in the outward constitutional form of the body; it is incomplete; it does not fully agree with the New Testament specimens. If any one of the purposes for which the association was formed be removed, there, too, is defect. And the same remark is applicable, if the voluntary connection with the body be removed from the characteristics of a church, and union with it be regarded as resulting, not from personal choice, but from parentage, or from one's national, or civil, relations.

Nor can any particulars not included in the description be properly and safely added, as necessary to the idea of a church. All appendages which are not contained in the scriptural view, however adapted they may appear to the gaining of certain objects, whether personal or public, will be found, on sufficiently long trial, to be spots and blemishes, and clogs to the free action of a church's powers. They will become points of accretion, around which ignorance, or superstition, or misdirected solicitude for the honor of Christ and the glory of the church, will gather masses

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of deformity and corruption. This receives abundant illustration from the natural results of the additions which have been made to the idea of a church, in the Greek and the Roman Catholic communions; also, from the legitimate results of introducing infant-baptism among Christian observances, and from the consequences of additions to the design of a church, on the ground that it was intended to act directly on governments, as in the English church, in the early ecclesiastical regulations of New England, and in the case of any alliances between church and state.

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CHAPTER II.

ORGANIZATION OF THE EARLIEST CHURCHES.

§ *The New Testament plan eminently simple: apparently the growth of circumstances, but in accordance with the will of Christ.* — Church polity, though exhibiting in the Christian world a multiform and cumberous machinery, is yet in the New Testament a matter of great simplicity. A church, as presented in the sacred records, has nothing in it of an imposing character; but is remarkably in keeping with the simple and unostentatious movements of the Founder of Christianity.

We have no evidence that our Lord ever, while on earth, gave special instructions to his apostles on the subject of church-organization; nor is the supposition, that he did so, at all necessary. That such an organization as his wisdom would have directed, could be commenced by them without preliminary instructions from himself is unquestionable; for by the temper of mind which his preparatory training of them had

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produced, also by his subsequent providential arrangement of circumstances, moreover, and particularly, by the direction which in due time he would give to their minds by the Holy Spirit, he could as effectually secure this end as by giving instructions before the necessity for action had arisen. It would seem that it was in this way he provided for bringing his purpose into effect.

But when we confine our attention to the human agents, the whole matter of church-organization appears to have been a natural and gradual growth from existing circumstances, as the circumstances arose and called into requisition the wisdom and piety of the apostles. So far as appears, a definite and minute system of church-order was not framed by them beforehand. A few fundamental principles as to membership and conduct of affairs appear to have been observed; and, in accordance with these principles and with a wise regard to existing circumstances, the apostles suggested or, sometimes, arranged all needful methods of supervision and action. They were, however, guided by wisdom higher than their own; and were thus led to a course entirely harmonious with their Lord's design.

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That the apostles had not framed beforehand a definite plan, seems clear from the fact, that a part of the apostolic era was a forming period as to arrangements for church affairs. Consequently, there was progress. When the apostle wrote to Timothy and Titus, church-order was, evidently, far in advance of what it was at first. The point of definite organization had, by that time, been reached.

§ *Germ of church organization.* — In tracing church organization back to its origin, we find its germ in the state of things existing during the life of Christ. The Jewish polity was not yet, indeed, dissolved ; still, Christ was evidently preparing the way for a separate community which was to regard him as its Head. The Jewish economy, as a religious establishment, was to be left " to grow old and vanish away ;" it was to die out. Our Lord selected twelve men as his special disciples and apostles. These he was preparing to be leaders of the new community and to be his representatives, qualified to teach and act in accordance with his own will. On them he perpetually inculcated the sentiment of mutual equality in point of dignity. All his instructions aimed to unite

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them together as brethren from whose breasts envy and jealousy ought to be banished, whose highest dignity would consist in humility, in condescending to one another and to men of low estate, and in efforts, by teaching and example to promote piety towards God and mutual justice and benevolence among men. All our Lord's intercourse with his apostles tended to impress on them these principles and to fit them for furnishing, in their example and in the regulations which they might make for the believers, a specimen of his will. When he was afterwards removed from them and they were left alone as his representatives, the sentiments which he had inculcated would tend to the formation, when circumstances should demand, of a very simple association and the creating of such offices, and only such, as necessity should require.

Besides, the apostles and other Jewish Christians had long been accustomed to a simple form of organization in the Jewish Synagogues. Those Jewish congregations, while they could not be authoritative models for the apostles, yet might naturally suggest arrangements which would meet the wants of the Christians.

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§ *The Apostles divinely qualified.* — In these movements of the apostles, we must also regard them as endowed with all needed divine influence for teaching the gospel and guiding the affairs of their Lord's followers. According to Matt. xvi. 19, and xviii. 18–10, they were invested with authority in regard to making known and acting upon the principles of their Lord's religion; in John xvi. 12–15 and xx. 21–23, adequate influence of the Holy Spirit was promised to them, as leaders in the new religion; in Acts i. 4, 5, 8, and ii. 33, a similar promise is recorded and the fulfilment declared.

§ *Case of the Apostle Paul.* — The training and teaching of the apostles by their Lord have been spoken of. The Apostle Paul was not, indeed, trained up, as were the other apostles, under the eye of Christ. But this deficiency was amply compensated by the special manner in which he became qualified for the apostleship. Besides his miraculous conversion, in connection with which the ascension and power of Christ were clearly disclosed to him, Acts ix. 3–6, xxii. 6–15, xxvi. 12–18, he was favored with unexampled "visions and revelations of the Lord," 2 Cor. xii. 1–7,

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1 Cor. xi. 23. Thus in all the necessary qualifications, he occupied the same ground as the other apostles. Compare 1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8–10, 2 Cor. xi. 5, xii. 11, 12.

§ *Unassuming deportment of the Apostles.* — It is worthy of notice, that the apostles in discharging their office did not, ordinarily, use their authority, either as a separate body of men, or as individuals, in a manner which would be indicative of their superiority. They acted, generally, rather as members of a deliberative body to which they could give advice, than as extraordinary officers empowered to act authoritatively. Their influence, however, was none the less on that account.

§ *Historical view of church organization, in the New Testament.* — For a while after our Lord's ascension, no arrangement in regard to offices appears to have been made; in all probability, the apostles alone occupied an official relation. Others, no doubt, took an active part, according to their endowments both by nature and the Divine Spirit, in exhortation, instruction and prayer, and in other modes of promoting the common good. At length, as we learn from the sixth chapter of Acts, when the number of disci-

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ples in Jerusalem had greatly increased, a disagreement arose in reference to the maintenance of destitute widows.* This circumstance suggested to the apostles the propriety of directing the brethren to select seven men who should be specially entrusted with this matter. Their direction on this subject was founded on the principle, that they themselves ought not to be burdened with pecuniary, or secular, affairs, but ought to give themselves without embarrassment "to prayer and the ministry of the word."

An office, properly speaking, was thus created; so that two official departments was, on that occasion, recognized as required by the wants of a church; one, which has respect to the spiritual care of the members and the dispensing of the gospel; another, which has respect to matters aside from prayer and the ministry of the word.

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* This disagreement originated among the Hellenist Christians, called in our version Grecians, that is, Jews who used the Greek language. They probably complained that the widows in their part of the church did not receive a fair proportion of pecuniary aid as compared with the widows of the Hebrew part of the church; that is, of the part of the church that spoke the Hebrew language as then current in Palestine.

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It is common to regard this appointment of the seven brethren as actually originating and establishing the office of Deacon. But no name indicative of office is given in the Scripture to these men; and as they were appointed to meet a special exigency, such as could not probably occur elsewhere than in Jerusalem, namely, a difficulty between two classes of Jewish Christians, this opinion has been called in question. This objection to the opinion, however, is not sufficiently weighty entirely to refute it; since the appointment, though originating in an exigency, peculiar probably to the church in Jerusalem, yet proceeded on a principle which would be everywhere operative and would naturally include a large class of services: namely, that the special engagement in the ministry of the word and in duties connected with it, ought not to be impeded by different cares. Neander, Church History, Vol. 1 p. 188, in common with church historians generally, takes it for granted that this was actually the origin of Deacons. But a somewhat different, though kindred, opinion is well worthy of consideration; namely, that this appointment to a certain special service originated a sort of eldership among

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the Christians, and proved the germ of the two offices which were finally established.*

Thus far there was but one church, that in Jerusalem. Subsequently the Christians were dispersed "throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria;" and though the apostles remained awhile in Jerusalem, Acts viii. 1, yet they also, at least all but two or three, afterwards went abroad. Thus the apostles and those brethren whose endowments fitted them for public service, were publishing the gospel far and wide.

Churches were now formed at a distance from Jerusalem; for in Acts, ix. 31, we read of "the churches in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee." They would naturally imitate in their arrangement the church in Jerusalem; with the difference, that the apostles, not being residents in these various places, could not be looked up to as the personal directors of their affairs. But as a company of officers had been appointed in the church at Jerusalem, so in these churches a board of officers would naturally be appointed on whom all official concerns would be devolved. These persons would, of course, be selected

* In the Appendix, this opinion, as well as some others, is more fully exhibited.

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for officers who gave indications of possessing gifts by nature, and by the Holy Spirit, qualifying them to conduct affairs, and to contribute to the spiritual edification of the church.

§ *Full growth of the organization.* — In the book of Acts, from the time of the apostle Paul's entering more fully on his work, a more particular account is given of his labors than of those of the other apostles. We are, consequently, restricted to his labors in our search for the organization of churches. It appears, then, that when in any place his labors were blessed, so that there was a company of converts, these converts became a church which was also furnished with its requisite officers. The word *elders*, Acts, xiv. 23, designates these officers: a word, which probably originated from the usage of the Jewish synagogues, and which would very naturally be transferred, by converted Jews, to Christian churches. This word would also be applicable, as expressing official respect rather than a specific service, to all the officers that might be appointed. Being in itself of a general signification, it could be applied, like our word *officer*, to men

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in various official positions*. But when a more particular mention of officers is made, as in Phil. i. 1, and 1 Tim. iii. two classes are named; bishops, that is, according to the etymology of the word *overseers*, also denominated pastors, Eph. iv. 11, and deacons, corresponding to the two departments of service, which were contemplated by the apostles at the election of the Seven in Jerusalem. Thus the arrangement, virtually commenced in that city, appears to have been everywhere adopted.†

* Two passages are best explained by the aid of such a view, Acts, xiv. 23. 1 Tim. v. 17. In the absence of definite information, and of certain argument, it seems probable from the usage in the New Testament, that the word *elder*, was, at first, employed as a general term, and afterwards, perhaps when the word *deacon* had become an official title, was appropriated usually to a chief officer in a church, and was thus equivalent to the word *bishop*, or *overseer*. Yet even after this, as in 1 Tim. v. 17, it would seem to have been occasionally employed in the general sense.

† Mosheim in his Commentaries on the affairs of the Christians, before the time of Constantine the Great, Vol. I. p. 145, Murdock's edition, expresses the opinion that "all these churches were constituted and formed after the model

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§ *More bishops than one in some churches.*—From Phil. i. 1, it is clear that the church in Philippi had more bishops than one, as well as more deacons than one; it would also appear, from Acts xx. 17, 28, that the church in Ephesus had several bishops. Yet in the third chapter of 1 Timothy, the apostle seems to have had before his mind the case of a church with one bishop, and several deacons. Probably, the circumstances of each church regulated the number of persons in each department of office. A church in a populous city, particularly when its members found it necessary to meet in various places, and when opportunities for disseminating the gospel in the surrounding country called for much Christian activity, would require several to be specially occupied in teaching, and in pastoral supervision, while in other situations one person might have been sufficient for this service.

§ *Churches of the apostolic times furnish us a model.*—As the apostle proceeded in this way, form-

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of that which was first planted at Jerusalem." Giesler also says in his Compendium of Ecclesiastical History, Vol. I., p. 90, Davidson's Translation, "The new churches everywhere formed themselves after the pattern of the mother-church in Jerusalem."

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ing separate congregations of believers, that is, separate individual churches, and perpetuating the two official departments of bishop, or overseer, also called *pastor*, and deacon "in every church," Acts xiv. 23, and as we have no intimation in the sacred record that any addition to this arrangement was made during the apostolic era, we have here a model for the organization of a Christian church.*

§ *Deaconesses.* — In the account thus far given of the organization of the earliest churches, no notice has been taken of deaconesses. Yet we have reason to believe that in those churches, at least in those which were composed in great part of Gentiles, there

* Mosheim, in his Institutes of Ecclesiastical History, Vol. I. p. 80, Murdock's translation, though he admits of more latitude than would to some appear justifiable, yet says — "If, however, what no Christian can doubt, the apostles of Jesus Christ acted by divine command and guidance, then that form of the primitive churches which was derived from the church of Jerusalem, erected and organized by the apostles themselves, must be accounted *divine*." We certainly have no adequate authority for any other form of a church, and are not at liberty to adopt any form opposed to the principles which entered into the apostolic form.

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were women to whom, as charged with special service, this appellation was given. The service in which Phebe of Cenchrea, Rom. xvi. 1, was occupied, was probably that of a deaconess. The language in the original of 1 Tim. iii. 11, "Even so must their wives," literally, "Even so the women," is best explained as relating to such women. The circumstances of the times in the age of the apostles made the services of women in church-affairs necessary, and led to this measure.

It is, however, to be considered that deaconesses sustained a relation only to a part, not to the whole, of a church: we must also bear in mind the sentiments of the apostle in regard to the appropriate position of women in a church, as expressed in 1 Tim. ii. 12. 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35. Hence, the relation of such persons could have been only, at most, a semi-official one, and would, probably, not be recognized on a formal or public occasion, as we see in Phil. i. 1, where the apostle mentions only, with an official intent, the bishops and deacons. While, however, it had respect only to a portion of a church, and was required by local circumstances, some of the substantial reasons for a church's employing the services of suitable women

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will always remain. It is a matter of indifference, whether this relation to a church be held permanently by the same individuals, or whether, to meet necessities as they arise, suitable women be temporarily appointed for specific services.

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CHAPTER III.

DUTIES AND POWER OF CHURCH OFFICERS. POWER OF CHURCHES.

The duties of the two classes of officers in a church may be anticipated from the preceding chapter.

§ *Duties of a Bishop.*—To the bishop's, that is, the pastor's, office belongs the spiritual superintendence of a church, together with the preaching of the gospel and conducting of the public worship, and contributing to the religious improvement of his people by private intercourse, according to the circumstances of families and of individuals. A pastor is, in ordinary cases, to be wholly devoted to the religious instruction and spiritual welfare of the people over whom he is placed. This appears from the principle which guided the apostles when they gave direction respecting the choice of the Seven, Acts vi. 2–4; and from intimations in the apostle's instructions to Timothy. Agreeably to 1 Tim. iii. 5, a bishop is to take care of the church of God; to iv. 13–16, he is to be occupied in promoting

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the religious culture of his own mind, and in persevering efforts for the spiritual welfare of those who hear him. Agreeably to 2 Tim. ii. 15, he must be a workman ably inculcating the true doctrine; and to iv. 1–5, he must be, "in season and out of season," occupied in preaching the gospel and guarding his people against error, always vigilant and aiming at the full accomplishment of his ministry. Of the same tenor are the passages, Tit. i. 9, "holding fast the faithful word, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers;" and Acts xx. 20, "I kept back nothing that was profitable."

His duties are to be discharged with freedom from a mercenary and lordly spirit. 1 Pet. v. 1–4; with a careful and deferential regard to circumstances and persons, 1 Tim. v. 1, 2; and in a manner worthy of universal respect, 1 Tim. iv. 6, 11, 12. Tit. ii. 15.

§ *Duties of Deacons.* — The deacons are to render service, particularly, in secular matters; such as attending to the wants of the indigent members, and to matters required by the church's welfare, which, if undertaken by the pastor, would prove a hindrance to the due performance of his appropriate work. They are, consequently, in their serving the church, special

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aids to the pastor. This general idea of serving the church in matters which are aside from the pastor's specific duties, and, so far as is necessary, in aid of the pastor, is capable of wide expansion, according to the exigencies of time and place, and of contraction in favoring circumstances. In case, for instance, of the pastor's sickness or absence, or in case of a vacancy in the pastoral office, the services of the deacons would, clearly, become more numerous and their responsibility increased.

The qualifications for the deacon's office are stated in 1 Tim. iii. 8–13. It is worthy of observation that *aptness to teach* is not one of these requisites. The deacon's office, as such, was not a teaching office, but was designed for services aside from public teaching.*

* The intimate connection of deacons with bishops, or pastors, in the official responsibilities of their several stations, sufficiently accounts for the fact, that subsequently to the apostle's time, when the distinction between clergy and laity became broadly marked, the deacons were regarded as a constituent part of the clerical body. The idea, also, of deacons belonging to the clerical body, easily led to the view that the deacon's office was the first step in "holy orders" as introductory to the priesthood.

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§ *Power of Church Officers.* — The duties of church officers have thus been briefly indicated. We are next to inquire, With what power are they clothed?

This inquiry has been variously answered; and it would seem, by usages which have prevailed in the Christian world, to be encumbered with much difficulty; yet it is capable of a very simple and satisfactory answer, if we restrict ourselves to the teachings of the New Testament.

The power which belongs to the officers of a church, considered apart from the church, is very limited: in fact, service, or duty, rather than power, is characteristic of their relation to a church. Should the proper province, also, of a church be duly observed, as relating to spiritual affairs and the extension of Christianity as a system for men's salvation, little occasion could ever arise for discussing the nature and extent of power belonging to a church officer in distinction from the members of a church.

§ 1. *Pastors.* — According to the phraseology of our English version of the New Testament, a species of *ruling* belongs particularly to the bishops, or pastors; and the members are directed to obey them.

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Thus, in, 1 Tim. v. 17, we read, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine; and in Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24, "Remember them which have the rule over you, — Obey them that have the rule over you, — Salute all them that have the rule over you." But the word *rule*, in its ordinary acceptation, does not well convey the meaning of the original terms employed in these passages. The original terms here used, rather convey the idea of *holding a foremost position*, or of *leadership*, in a church. As the original phraseology conveys only the general idea of leaders, of persons occupying a foremost position, it is not surprising that this relation, so far at least as power is concerned, is not accurately defined, and is not capable from any directions or examples in Scripture, of being particularly described. The very genius of Christianity and the character of the New Testament records forbid us to expect particularity of detail on this subject. Christian feeling was, at first, sufficiently pure and strong to secure on the part of the people proper respect and deference for the officers, as well as to preserve the officers from the dictatorial spirit of lordship.

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The official designations of the persons in question certainly convey the ideá of preëminence: thus, agreeably to Greek etymology, *those who stand before*,* chief men, presiding officers; *those who lead*,† directors; *shepherds*, ‡ (pastors); *overseers;* § *teachers;* ‖ *elders;* ¶ whether in point of age or as charged with responsibilities suitable for a person of mature age.

These designations make it sufficiently evident that a bishop held the chief place in the church which he served; and in view of them it would be natural that in the meetings of a church for worship, or for business, or both, the pastor, or one of the pastors, would superintend as leader of the worship, as moderator, or pre-

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* Προϊστωτες, 1 Tim. v. 17. Compare 1 Thess. v. 12.

† ηγουμενοι, Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24.

‡ ποιμενες, Eph. iv. 11.

§ επισκοποι, 1 Tim. iii. 2.

‖ διδασκαλοι, Eph. iv. 11.

¶ πρεσβυτεροι, Acts xiv. 23; 1 Tim. v. 17. The term, *ruling elders*, as distinguishing certain officers from preachers, or pastors, is not authorized by the Greek New Testament; since those whom our version represents as *ruling* held, evidently, in the majority of instances, the position of preachers. See 1 Tim. v. 17. Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24.

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siding officer. It is thus, in all probability, that bishops were church rulers, as well as by their general care and by being religious teachers of the people and expounders of divine truth. On any occasions, also, which would bring the affairs of Christians into public notice, these men would naturally be regarded as heads of the churches; and would, naturally, if circumstances required, be the organs of communication between the churches and other bodies.

As being spiritual guides and overseers of a church, they would be entitled to deference. Hence, a spirit of respectful subjection to their instructions is enjoined; as in Heb. xiii. 17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." That an indiscriminate subjection, yielded to them simply on official grounds, is not enjoined, clearly follows from the mention in 1 Thess. v. 13, of their *work*, "the work of Christ" performed by them, Phil. ii. 30, as being the ground of the respect to which they are entitled, and from the caution given them in 1 Peter v. 3, against indulging the spirit of authority. This results, also, obviously from the principle that a pastor is to inculcate the religion of Christ, and that his instructions are worthy of acceptance only so far as they have the character

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of "sound speech that cannot be condemned." Titus ii. 8, a pastor has no official authority independent of the instructions of the Holy Scriptures, properly explained and properly applied. Whatever these teach or enjoin, he is to make known, and to seek for it reception and obedience; his personal or official authority comes not into consideration; he is a servant of Christ. This principle contracts the power of a pastor, as a church officer, within narrow limits. He, as well as every private member, must be controlled by the word of God; and the greater deference which is due to him arises mainly, though not exclusively — for our Creator has so constituted us that we naturally feel respect for a person occupying an honorable official position — from the circumstance, that he may be presumed to be more acquainted with the Scriptures and to be more thoroughly pious than those whose employments are less spiritual.*

* The direction of the Apostle in 1 Tim. v. 19, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses," was probably founded in part on this natural sentiment of respect; while, at the same time, greater carefulness in reference to an accused elder would be required by the presumption of his innocence in view of his superior obligations and motives to piety.

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Neander, in his Church History, Vol. I, p. 189, justly remarks, "As regards the relation in which the presbyters [the elders] stood to the communities, they were not designed to exercise absolute authority, but to act as presiding officers and guides of an ecclesiastical republic; to conduct all things with the coöperation of the communities as their ministers, and not their masters."

This fraternal spirit in which the presiding officers of the earliest churches were required to perform their duties, beautifully accords with the unassuming manner in which the apostles conducted towards the Christians, as intimated in the preceding chapter. The pastors were not to lord it over God's heritage, 1 Peter v. 3, as dictators but to care for the flock of God, as shepherds; and in this relation and the manifestation of this spirit they would be entitled to respect and deference.

Accordingly, the members of a church are required by the New Testament to hold their pastors in high esteem and to receive from them with an obedient spirit the word of God; as in 1 Thess. v. 12, 13, "We beseech you, brethren, to know" — that is, to cherish a respectful and affectionate interest for — "them

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which labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake," and in 1 Tim. v. 17, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine;" also, in Heb. xiii. 17, "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves."

§ 2. *Deacons.* — In the forward position occupied by the pastor, or pastors, of a church, and in the respect and affection due to such, the deacons partake in just proportion; as appears from the nature of the case, from their being mentioned, Phil. i. 2, in conjunction with the pastors, and from 1 Tim. v. 17, which requires honor to be paid to those elders who serve otherwise than in the dispensation of the gospel, as well as to those who preach.

§ *Power of churches, considered in reference to the power of church officers.* — Another principle of great weight, relative to the power of church officers, is contained in the reply to the question; Where does church power reside? Does it reside in the official body of a church? or, in the body of a church itself, including officers and private members?

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The reply to this inquiry is of great importance, as it so nearly affects the relation of an individual pastor to a church, and of church officers, as such, to churches viewed collectively.

From the Acts of the Apostles we learn that even on the most important questions the churches were the acting bodies. Business was transacted by a body called *the church*, or *the brethren*, or *the multitude*, together with the elders; and not by elders, as such, aside from the church. Thus, when Matthias was selected to supply the place of the apostate Judas, Acts i. 15–26; and when the choice of the Seven was made, Acts vi. 2–5, it was the assembled brethren who were addressed and who acted. When the question concerning circumcision was to be carried up from Antioch to Jerusalem, it was *the brethren* who appointed the messengers for that purpose, Acts xv. 1, 2; and when that question was settled, Acts xv. 1, 2, 7, 12, 22, the apostles did not alone, in their official capacity, pronounce a decision, nor did the elders act by themselves apart from the members of the church. The church members, including the elders, were assembled together;* in their presence the question

* When at the election of the Seven and at the consultation

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was discussed, and with their concurrence the matter was disposed of. Acts xv. 7, 12, 22.

Then, again, a messenger was to accompany the apostle on a special occasion, the messenger was appointed by the church, 2 Cor. viii. 19, 23. 1 Cor. xvi. 3.

The exclusion, too, of an unworthy member from a church, was the act of the assembled church, 1 Cor. v. 3–5, 13; and the re-admission of that person was, also, an act of the church, 2 Cor. ii, 5–9.

In 1 Cor. vi. 4, 5, is also a clear intimation that a church was expected to conduct its own affairs.†

§ *Result thus far.* — It follows, that church-power resides in a church itself, not in its officers as distinct from the body of the church.

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in reference to circumcision *the multitude* are said to have come together, we need not suppose that so numerous a company as composed the church in Jerusalem actually assembled in one place. It is enough if a large number of the church were in attendance; or if it were generally understood that the members, as such, were to attend.

† The apostle was here rebuking the Corinthians for going to law before the heathen magistrates, as if among themselves there was not even one who was adequate to pronounce a righteous judgment between Christian brethren.

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§ *The apostles' manner of conducting in reference to church-business.* — It is worthy of distinct observation, however, that, when apostles were present, a direction was given by them to the action of churches. Churches not only availed themselves of apostolic suggestions, but also acted accordingly, as we see in Acts i. 15, 21, 22, in reference to the choice of Matthias as an apostle, and vi. 2, 3, 5, in reference to the choice of the Seven; likewise in 1 Cor. v. 3, 4, in reference to the exclusion of an unworthy member, and in 2 Cor. ii. 5–9, in reference to his re-admission. In the last case, the apostle not only *besought* the Corinthians to restore the penitent offender, but expected them to be *obedient*, thus taking the attitude of authority.*

* The idea presented above concerning apostolic advice and guidance, suggests what is meant, in part, by officers in a church being leaders, and shows what kind of guidance belongs to them; namely, that of *influence*, through intelligence and wisdom, rather than of *command*, or *control*. In this way, the officers in a church may *approach* to a resemblance of apostles, in the latter's giving directions concerning the affairs of a church; for church officers without inspiration, cannot assume such ground as apostles occupied.

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The language of Acts xv. 6, "And the apostles and elders came together to consider of this matter," implies at first sight that these official personages took into consideration, by themselves, the subject which was to be acted on, in order, perhaps, to mark out a course, or prepare advice, for the assembly. On examination, however, it becomes clear that a decided view of the case was not prepared previously to the public meeting, as the whole subject was discussed in public even by the apostles, and, till after the discussion, there seems to have been a shade of difference among the apostles. The correct view, according to the narrative, is, that the matter was sent up to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, from the church in Antioch, Acts xv. 2; and on information received, the apostles and elders at Jerusalem came together to consider it. Their meeting was a public one. Though no mention is made of any participation in the discussion by others than the apostles, yet the brethren of the church were acknowledged, in the adoption of the conclusion which had been reached. Acts xv. 12, 22, 23.

§ *Historical Instance of an apparently different tenor.* — The only historical instance, in which indi-

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viduals of authority appear to have performed for a church a matter of business without the church's action, occurs in Acts xiv. 23, where it is said that the apostles, Paul and Barnabas, ordained elders in every church, which, during the missionary tour, they had formed. The word *ordain* must not be here understood in our modern technical sense, as indicating a ceremonial act, but as equivalent to our word *appoint*. The passage conveys the idea that Paul and Barnabas selected the men spoken of, and appointed them to their offices.

If this were the only passage in which mention occurs of choosing church-officers, or of the transaction of church-business, the view that Paul and Barnabas acted alone on these occasions would be valid. But since, on other occasions, it is so clear that churches acted in appointments to office, this passage may bear a corresponding explanation. The churches spoken of in this passage, might have taken an active part in the appointment of officers, though the historian makes no mention of the circumstance. Paul and Barnabas might have proposed the persons best fitted for office, and the churches, either by formal vote or by expressed assent, elected those very persons.

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This view of the passage receives support from comparing it with a statement in Acts xvi. 4, where "the decrees" are spoken of "that were ordained of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem." Here only the apostles and elders are mentioned; and if we had no other information about this matter, we should be compelled to regard these decrees as emanating from apostles and elders alone. But according to Acts xv. 2, 4, 12, 22, 23, 30, the church at Jerusalem was also active in the business. Many suppositions might be made, as accounting for this manner of speaking. Perhaps these decrees had been committed to writing, and bore the signatures of the apostles and elders: perhaps, as a general rule, the officers were considered in regard to business which had been disposed of by the church, as representatives of the body: or, the apostles and elders were regarded as taking the lead in this transaction: or, what is most probable, the historian purposely employed a brief mode of expression.

But without subjecting this passage to the least constraint, "it may be," as Neander remarks in his Church History, Vol. I. p. 189, "It may be that in many cases the apostles themselves, where they could not as yet have sufficient confidence in the spirit of the

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first new communities, conferred the important office of presbyters on such as in their own judgment, under the light of the Divine Spirit, appeared to be the fittest persons. *Their* choice would, however, deserve in the highest degree the confidence of the communities."

Such a proceeding would not, it may be added, be at variance with a choice of officers by the churches themselves in the absence of apostles, or on subsequent occasions of electing elders. Even if Paul and Barnabas did, on the occasions mentioned, appoint elders without an election by the churches themselves, this act might have been performed by them as one required by the immature and inexperienced state of those churches; and it, doubtless, received the cordial concurrence of those churches. It establishes no principle in regard to the regular transaction of church-affairs, at a period when men of extraordinary endowments and position were no longer on earth. It does, however, suggest and encourage the idea, that, at an early period of a church's existence, circumstances may require a minister of the gospel, acquainted with the case and with the characters of the members, to select and appoint its officers;* not, how-

* Such cases can be easily conceived of in churches of heathen converts, on missionary ground.

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ever, in an arbitrary manner, without the concurrence of the churches concerned, since such concurrence appears to have been carefully aimed at by the apostles, as a general practice. Subsequent elections, as well as other business, may proceed from the church itself.

§ *Another similar passage.* — Another passage of a similar character, since, at first sight and viewed by itself, it conflicts, in part at least, with the idea that a church transacted its own business, is Tit. i. 5, "That thou shouldest ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."

Neander's remark, Church History, Vol. I, p. 189, is here in point: "when St. Paul empowers Titus to set presiding officers over the communities who possessed the requisite qualifications, this circumstance decides nothing as to the mode of choice, nor is a choice by the community itself thereby necessarily excluded."

§ *Ultimate Result.* — From the statements in the New Testament now given, it appears that the earliest churches were assemblies furnished with their proper officers, and transacting their own business. A church was itself the seat of power: the wisdom and

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integrity of its officers, however, and particularly of apostles, were of leading influence, just as in all wise deliberative, and executive bodies, men of eminent wisdom and integrity give a tone to the proceedings.

§ *Relation of the question of church-power to that of the power of church-officers.* — We have been considering the question concerning church-power, not by itself, but as relative to the question concerning the power of church-officers. The conclusion is obvious: the officers of a church have no power in themselves alone; they are not a body for ecclesiastical business separate from the church itself, but, as members and officers, are to act with it.

A question, then, concerning a balance of power between churches and church-officers, is wholly superfluous. Church-officers and church-members are but parts of one whole; their actings are joint and mutual.

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CHAPTER IV.

MEMBERSHIP IN A CHURCH.

As the result of our investigation thus far, we have before our minds a collection of avowed believers in Christ, composing a church with its two classes of officers, in accordance with its spiritual and secular necessities, and those of individuals belonging to it. We have, also, seen that the body, thus organized, has in it all the elements of church action.

We now inquire for the principles which regulate membership in a church.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, A DUTY OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST. — Membership in a church is, ordinarily, a duty incumbent on believers in Christ. This appears, however, not from any command of Christ; for no such command is found. A direct command was, evidently, not necessary in order to make known his will. If his will in this respect is necessarily indicated in his general instructions to his followers, and is necessarily involved in the very design of his relig-

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ion, the result is not only just as surely gained, but is gained in a manner that prevents embarrassment. A preceptive declaration of his will might, perhaps, leave less scope for a free, affectionate obedience resulting from those spiritual impulses which have been set in operation by the renovation of the soul. A command on this subject would, also, have been liable to various exceptions. Still, it was our Lord's will that his followers should be associated together in the capacity of churches, the members of which should sustain to one another peculiar relations.

This is involved in many of his declarations and instructions; for these would lose their force on a different supposition. He has, for instance, required his disciples to be baptized *as his followers* and to observe all things which he had commanded his apostles to teach them; he also made a marked distinction between his disciples and other men, who are denominated *the world;* he has likewise enjoined on his followers, as characteristic of them, mutual affection. That believers in Christ should be thus united together was, evidently, the view of the apostles, and was the practice, ordinarily, in the apostolic times. That it is a duty appears, also, from the fact that the Christian

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spirit naturally and almost irresistibly tends to this; and that, without this, the institutions of Christianity would not be maintained and diffused.

That membership in the earliest churches was not a merely casual circumstance of connection with a changeable assemblage of such Christians as might reside in the vicinity of each other, but was of a permanent character, with a binding force on the members and involving special mutual relations among them, appears from the fact that business imposing obligation for time to come was performed by them, and that they were instructed to use stringent measures, if necessary, for preserving the moral purity of the members.

ADMISSION TO MEMBERSHIP IN A CHURCH. — The principles which regulated admission to membership in a church, subsequently to its entering on church-action, were substantially the same as were involved in its formation. It was formed of believers in Jesus who had avowed, through baptism in his name, their reception of him as their Saviour and Lord, and professed their subjection of themselves to his religion. For admission at a subsequent time into their company, it was requisite that a person should be, in like manner, a believer in Jesus and avow, by baptism, his

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faith in Him. Thus it is stated in Acts ii. 41, that "they who gladly received the instructions of the apostle concerning Jesus, as the promised Messiah and Saviour, were baptized; and there were added about three thousand souls." During the apostolic age, those persons who embraced the doctrine that Jesus was the Son of God and the Saviour, and were baptized in his name, that is, acknowledging him in that act as being what the apostles claimed for him, became members of a church.*

§ *Simplicity of the requisites for church membership.* — It here requires distinct notice that at first the acknowledging of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour, with the avowal, expressed or implied, of serious purpose to live according to his religion, was all that was required for baptism and

* Compare Acts ii. 36, 38, 1 John iv. 15. A direct passage on this point, in our English version, so far as baptism is concerned, is Acts viii. 37, "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest [be baptized]. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God." But the genuineness of this verse is questionable, as it is not found in the best manuscripts.

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membership in a church. That so simple a requisition was considered adequate, is sufficiently accounted for by its comprehensiveness. To avow this truth was, virtually, to avow the Christian religion; to be baptized as a believer in Jesus was a public embracing of his religion; it involved the profession of penitence, of trust in him, and of the purpose to lead a life of righteousness in accordance with this religion. It was justly taken for granted, since persons were admitted to the Christian profession, not as being already thoroughly instructed and mature, but as having commenced the Christian life, that the teachable spirit which was shown in embracing the first principles, or elements, of this religion would admit all its truths, both doctrinal and practical.

It should be borne in mind, too, that at that time every man, with inconsiderable exceptions, professed some religion, whether the Pagan, or the Jewish, or the Christian. If he were not a Christian, he was an adherent of some other religion. If he professed to believe in Jesus, he believed in him distinctively, as the Head of a distinct religion, and embraced *that* religion; in other words, he embraced the whole system of Christian faith and practice to the discarding

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of other systems. To believe in Christ amounts, in the sense of the New Testament, to a sincere and practical adoption of the Christian religion.

It must, also, be taken into account, that Christianity is not so much a system of doctrine, as a system of life. The intellect is, indeed, concerned in it; but much more the heart. Since then a right moral disposition was involved in the declaration of faith in Christ as the Son of God, such a declaration met the demands of the case.

§ *The original requisites still in force.* — The rule which regulated admission into the earliest churches, is of permanent force. Personal faith in Christ as the Saviour, and Lord, is the prime requisite; and the next is baptism, as the avowal of that faith, Matt. xxviii. 19, and as the recognition of the death and resurrection of Christ, and of the believer's spiritual renovation by virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, Rom. vi. 3, 4; Col. ii. 11,12; 1 Pet. iii. 21.* A person who gives

* Thus full of meaning, in its original intent, is baptism, acknowledging those cardinal truths of the Christian system, which, almost by necessity, involve the rest, and those feelings towards Christ, which involve entire Christian character.

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a church satisfactory evidence of being a believer in the Christian system of religion, and who has in baptism avowed himself a believer, is suitable to be welcomed into its membership. The manner of obtaining this evidence, and the circumstances connected with his reception into membership, may, of course, be indefinitely various, according as a wise expediency may direct.

We have no evidence that, at first, any particular mode of proceeding was observed in procuring evidence of Christian character; or, that a church went through some process of formal action on a request for admission. No particular method was, at that time, necessary, however necessary or expedient it might have become in subsequent times. Originally, a readiness to profess one's self a believer in Christ was sufficient to secure for him a welcome into the Christian brotherhood. And yet, even thus early, cases like that of Saul of Tarsus might arise, in which there would be grounds for withholding confidence in a person's sincerity, so that special evidence might be requisite that he had really become a believer. Likewise, in the altered circumstances which the progress of events occasioned, the simple declaration of a per-

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son that he had become a Christian, would not contain so much evidence of sincerity as formerly, and, consequently, some formal process might be deemed suitable, if not necessary, as preliminary to his reception.

MUTUAL RELATION OF MEMBERS OF A CHURCH, AND DUTIES SPRINGING FROM IT. — This relation is that of brethren in Christ, acknowledging him, in common, as their Teacher, Saviour, and Lord, associated by a conscientious regard to his will, by a common sympathy growing out of their connection with Christ, and by desires, in common, for the spiritual welfare of men and for the extension of the gospel.*

This relation embraces the spiritual concerns alone, of those who are united in it, except cases of affliction, appealing to the sympathies of persons united by the bond of a common faith and mutual love, and by special connection in the same portion of the Christian brotherhood.

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* The nature of this relation shows the necessity of cordiality on the part of a church in reference to the admission of a candidate for membership. The admission of a person against the judgment of even a small minority, puts at hazard an essential element in a church, namely, the mutual Christian fellowship of its members.

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Beyond the pale of their spiritual concerns is an indefinite number of subjects on which they may differ from each other in opinion and action, and respecting which, their church relation requires them to cherish only mutual charity. Matters of opinion, aside from those which are settled by inspiration, and which are therefore, not properly subjects for human judgment, may be regarded by members of the same church with every shade of diversity, without impairing mutual Christian love, or disturbing their mutual church relation.

§ *Duties springing from this relation.* — These may be embraced under the following heads:

1. Fellowship of each other, as avowed disciples of Christ, forming together a part of the Christian brotherhood.

2. Sympathy with one another in trials and sorrows, and readiness to minister to one another's necessities.

3. Conceding to one another liberty of judgment and action in all matters respecting which diversities, are consistent with Christian character and duty. On many subjects different opinions may be held, and different courses of conduct be pursued, by members of

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the same church, while at the same time they cherish a strict regard to the will of Christ and to the good of the church.

4. Fraternal watchfulness over one another, and readiness to caution and reclaim a member who violates his Christian obligations.

5. Union in public worship, and coöperation in efforts for the prosperity and usefulness of the church.

TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP. — From the nature of the case, membership in a church, originating in obligation to Christ, designed to aid directly in a person's becoming prepared for heaven, and to perpetuate the Saviour's arrangements for the spiritual welfare of mankind, is of a permanent character. It is properly terminated only by death, or by exclusion on the part of a church for justifiable reasons.

The voluntary removal of a member from one church to another, may also be called a terminating of his connection with the former church; but this is only a transfer of his connection from one church to another. In point of theory, the connection with a church is not dissolved; since he retains his connection with the former till he has become united to the latter.

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§ *A Church possesses the power of exclusion.* — That the power of exclusion is possessed by a church, may be inferred from the Saviour's direction in Matt. xviii. 17; "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican;" and is evident from Scriptural example, as in 1 Cor. v. 3–5, 11–13, the last clause of which passage is, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." This power is necessary also, to a church for its self-protection; without it, elements dangerous to the church's efficiency, and threatening even its existence as a spiritual community, would be retained, and the very design of the establishment of churches might be not only frustrated, but perverted.

§ *Nature and design of exclusion from a Church.* Exclusion is the highest censure which a church can pass. But as a church is a spiritual community, such an act inflicts no civil penalties; it is not designed to affect a person's civil rights or standing. It does, indeed, often impair a person's standing in the civil community; but this result rather flows from his loss of reputation, than from his loss of a place in a church, and is an indirect consequence of the exclusion when

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such an act is justly performed; a consequence, for which the person himself, not the church, is responsible.

This act regards the person as a moral being, who has avowed subjection to the Lord Jesus, and has united himself to a church for spiritual benefit to himself and usefulness to others. It is intended to bear on his conscience, and to preserve the purity of the Christian cause. Church discipline, both in its lower and its higher degrees, besides aiming to remove unsound and dangerous elements, should be regarded, also, as of a reclaiming nature, not as cutting off the hope of recovery to righteousness and to union with the Saviour's people. It is not an act of vengeance, designed mainly to inflict pain, to bring a professed Christian into disrepute, or to make him a public example; it has a supreme regard to the glory of Christ, and its purpose should be, that the offender's "spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." 1 Cor. v. 5. The act of exclusion should not be performed until the hope of a good result, without resorting to this extreme measure, can be no longer reasonably indulged, unless such scandal has been cast on the Christian name as requires the most

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prompt and utter, as well as decided, disapprobation. Nor, even in cases apparently hopeless, should the merciful design of church censure be forgotten, for, while life lasts, we should not wholly despair of a happy result to the divinely appointed methods of instruction and reproof.

It hardly needs be added, that a church, when called to this extreme act of censure, should proceed with a very devout and tender spirit. Personal feeling of an unfavorable character on the part of any members, should be laid aside; and solicitude for the glory of Christ, for the purity and usefulness of the church, and for the highest good of the offender, should pervade the transaction.

§ *Cases requiring exclusion.* — The following cases, according to scriptural precept or example, require exclusion from a church.

1. Personal offences which after suitable endeavors are not brought to a satisfactory issue.

Thus, our Lord in Matt. xviii. 15–17, directs the injured party, in the case of one brother's doing wrong to another, first to seek a private interview for adjusting the difficulty. Should he fail in this attempt at

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reconciliation, he is to take one, or two, with him, in hope of succeeding by their aid. The subordinate object, also, is gained by taking with him one or two persons, that they will be able to testify in the case, should witnesses be needed. If this second endeavor fail, the case is to be laid before the church and by their interposition a reconciliation is to be sought. Should the effort of the church fail, the offender is to be regarded "as an heathen man and a publican," that is, as unsuitable for religious fellowship.

This direction of our Lord to an injured individual is reasonably held to involve the duty of the church to separate the offender from membership with them.

2. The commission of immoralities. In 1 Cor. fifth chapter, the apostles specifies several violations of morality, the commission of which, by a church member, would render him unsuitable to be retained in the Christian company. By parity of reason, the commission of similar immoralities subjects the offender to exclusion.

A process of action in such cases is not given by the apostle. The direction in Matt. xviii. 15–17, is not applicable, since the offence is not personal, not affect-

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ing so much any one Christian brother, as the whole church to which the individual belongs, or the general cause of religion. As soon as a person's guilt in such cases is ascertained, the apostle's direction would require that he be excluded, unless, as we may fairly believe, a sufficient reason appear for barring, or delaying, the judgment of the church. What would be a sufficient reason cannot be stated abstractly: it must depend on the circumstances of a case.

It is reasonable, that differences between immoralities should be taken into consideration; some being more hazardous to public morality, and more reproachful, than others; in respect to some, the evidence of genuine sorrow for the commission of them being less easy to procure, than in respect to others; and profession of sorrow in respect to some being so much more ready, and so much less reliable, than in respect to others. The sacredness of religion, and the demands of a high-toned morality in a community, are justly to be taken into account: and in some cases of immorality, instant exclusion would be required, while a deferring of the final act would be suitable in others. Violations of sexual morality are best met by immediate exclusion, because such crimes are so ab-

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horrent to religion, and so deadly to the moral interests of society: immediate exclusion in such cases, on the ascertainment of the crime, has much justification in the direction of the apostle, 1 Cor. v. 3–5, to separate at once from the Christian brotherhood the incestuous man.

Other instances of immorality may require the same prompt judgment; and all violations of morality require instant attention on the part of a church. Promptness, in such cases, in order to ascertain the facts, and the necessary discontinuance of a person's good standing during the investigation, go far towards vindicating the purity of religion and the honor of a church.

3. *The maintaining of ruinous errors.* — According to 1 Tim. i. 19, 20, the apostle had removed from the Christian company Hymenæus and Alexander, who had abandoned the faith. From a second reference to Hymenæus, in 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18, it appears that they had openly maintained error in regard to the resurrection, greatly to the injury of the Christian cause. This doctrine was so intimately connected with the Christian system (compare 1 Cor. xv. 12–14),

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that a denial of it was fraught with harm. In consequence of their teaching this error, and thereby "overthrowing the faith of some," they were regarded as unworthy of the Christian name, and were by the apostle "delivered unto Satan,"* as belonging, not to

* The delivering over to Satan of a transgressor who had professed to be a follower of Christ, was peculiarly an apostolic act, "in the name, and with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. v. 4. That act was followed by various providential inflictions of suffering, as would appear from 1 Cor. v. 5, where the expression occurs, "for the destruction of the flesh." That an apostle's denunciation of gross offences against Christ, was followed by physical suffering, sometimes by sickness, sometimes even by death, is evident from the case of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v. 5, 10, who were smitten with death; the case of Elymas the sorcerer, Acts xiii. 11, who was struck with blindness. The case of the Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 30, was a similar one, many of whom in consequence of abuses of the Lord's supper had been subjected to sickness, and many to death. Though this strong expression, *to deliver unto Satan!* might seem to indicate an utter and a final abandonment of a transgressor to Satan, the agent of evil and misery, as not belonging to the body of Christ, yet the accompanying language in 1 Tim. i. 20, and 1 Cor. v. 5, shows that the apostolic act was indended to be remedial:

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Christ, but to Satan, "the God of this world," 2 Cor. iv. 4, "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2.

Caution, however, is eminently necessary in treating cases of religious error, since error is of various degrees, and its injurious tendencies also are variable. A distinction is to be made between errors whose tendency is evidently and directly ruinous, and those which are of less hurtful tendency. Regard should, also, be had to the conduct of a person who has imbibed erroneous opinions. Members who embrace serious errors are sometimes disposed to make them matters of frequent conversation, or in other ways to seek their extension, while some maintain a prudent

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the sentence was pronounced in hope that the transgressor would be reclaimed, or at least that the offence would not be repeated. In the case of the incestuous Corinthian, the ultimate aim was that "the spirit might be saved;" in the case of Hymenæus and Alexander, that they might become sensible of the evil of their deeds, and "learn not to blaspheme." Whether the reform would result from their bitter experience, of being delivered up to Satan, or whether this experience would be forestalled by timely repentance, does not appear.

This formula was not employed in the early centuries succeeding the apostolic age; the power which it implied was doubtless restricted to the apostles.

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silence, determined not to disturb the harmony of the church. By improper treatment, too, error is matured, and the mole-hill becomes a mountain. Some regard should, also, be had to the existing state of religious opinions in a community; for in some regions a particular error might have but little, if any, influence, while in others it might be extremely pernicious.

But while caution should be exercised, it is obvious that if a member maintain opinions directly at variance with those which the church regards as vital, and if his conduct in reference to those opinions be such as to bring the church into peril, the church may justly refuse to continue him in its membership. Any association of men would claim such a right. It is necessary to self-protection. Besides, excommunication, not being in the least a civil act, inflicts no disabilities as to a man's intercourse with society; it does not hinder him from declaring, or disseminating, his peculiar views: it only hinders him from having the apparent sanction of a church, and relieves the church from any troublesome interference, for which, if he were a member, he might have opportunities. And thus the right of private judgment is not invaded: for it is presumed that the individual holding serious

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errors, maintains them to the detriment of the Christian cause. Should he retain them in his own breast, the case would be different. As the minds of men are not to be trammelled, it is impossible to say to what extent members may hold peculiar views, provided they do not hazard the welfare of the church, but continue to be peaceable and useful members.

4. *The creating of dissensions and parties.* — The apostle gave the direction to Titus, iii. 10, "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." A heretic, in the Scriptural sense of the word, is a man who, whether by false doctrines, or other means, creates parties in a church, unfavorable to its interests. The idea of a Christian church involves union and fellowship of spirit: a temper and course of conduct leading to dissensions, is, therefore, at variance with an essential principle of church-membership. A member, then, whose conduct tends to array one portion of a church against another, would, after being suitably admonished, be justly liable to exclusion.

§ *General remark.* — Few cases, requiring or justifying exclusion, occur in the history of churches,

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which may not be ranked under one, or another, of those now mentioned. A general remark must, however, be added, in accordance with 2 Thess. iii. 6, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us:" namely, that continuance in conduct which is inconsistent with the character of Christians as being the people of God, and separate from the world, and which is consequently inconsistent with Christian fellowship, requires a church to separate from its membership a person thus disregarding his Christian obligations.

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CHAPTER V.

MUTUAL RELATION OF CHURCHES. — ASSOCIATIONS OF CHURCHES. — ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCILS.

We have thus far been contemplating a single church of Christ, as a deliberative and executive body, conducting its own affairs in subordination to the will of its sovereign Head, and paying deference to the apostles of Christ whenever it could receive their counsel and guidance. Such a body was obviously, in its proper sphere, independent of extraneous human control and responsible solely to Christ.

§ *Churches multiply: each complete in itself and independent.* — Very soon in the history of Christian affairs, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, many such bodies are found. To each one of these belong alike the characteristics which have been mentioned. Each, then, is an independent body. Each one, owning spiritual allegiance only to Christ, is independent not only of any external power different in nature from itself, but also, so far as rights and authority are

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concerned, of every other similar body; that is, of every other church. No one of these can properly control another, as if superior to it in point of authority; no one of them is responsible to another, as if subordinate to it. They are alike responsible to Christ for their acts. Subordination in regard to one another finds no place among them. They are independent bodies; independent, in their appropriate sphere, of the civil power, independent of one another, independent of any human central authority vested either in an individual, or in an organized board, or in an assembly.

Such is the view to which the New Testament leads us. We read of church in various cities, as Jerusaelm, Antioch, Ephesus, and others; also in various districts and provinces, as Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Galatia, and others. But, in all the notices occurring in the New Testament, we find not the slightest intimation of a dependence for church action of one on another; each appears by itself an acting body, complete in itself for all the purposes of its organization. We find not the slightest intimation of any superiority, as to authority, of one above another, or of the existence of any central authority guiding the whole, or a portion, of these churches. Each is addressed as a

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separate company, competent to decisions and arrangements as to its affairs. Even the deference which was paid to the apostles was not claimed, nor the authority which warranted it, exercised, by the apostles in a way which would interfere with freedom of action on the part of churches; nor was it accorded to apostles by the churches in a *combined* capacity, but by each one for itself. No occasion arose, during the period covered by the New Testament history, requiring churches to combine for any purposes.*

§ *Distinction as to independence between churches of Christ and Jewish Synagogues.* — A striking difference in this respect is observable between churches of Christ, as exhibited in the New Testament, and the Jewish synagogues. These synagogues, though separate from one another, attending to their own internal and local concerns, yet held themselves in subordination to a central power, the Sanhedrim, in Jerusalem;

* The contribution for the relief of Christians at Jerusalem, made up by the Christians of Macedonia and Achaia, Rom. xv. 26, may perhaps be regarded as a united effort. But we have no evidence that the churches concerned entered into a formal combination for the purpose.

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to that power they were responsible, and it was felt throughout the synagogues. The Sanhedrim was the central Board of Judaism, the supreme visible authority to which Jews, individually, and the synagogues all over the world looked as their spiritual centre.

Nothing of this kind in respect to Christian churches appears in the New Testament. Churches appear there, however numerous they became, as acting in their separate capacity without recognizing dependence on, or responsibility to, any superior earthly power. It was intended, as it would seem, that they should stand in immediate connection with Christ as their Head, their Life, without any mediating individual, or body, between them and Him; just as each individual Christian is to come into immediate communion with Him. Christianity, being the final religious dispensation for man, and designed for producing and maintaining the maturity of mankind, treats its individual recipients as capable of sustaining themselves, in all spiritual concerns, by virtue of their union with Christ; and in like manner, it treats each church collection of its recipients as capable of conducting all the matters pertaining to a church by the wisdom and piety of those who compose it.

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§ *Churches have relations to one another.*— While churches are, according to the New Testament view, thus independent, as to rights and privileges, both of one another and of any human power, they are, notwithstanding, intimately related to one another, and are mutually dependent for the highest enjoyment of the Christian religion, and for the highest efficiency in laboring for their appropriate ends. Independence is not isolation, in churches any more than in families, or towns. Each of these qualities, independence and dependence, is in the most healthful state when due regard is paid to each; in order to the due operation of either, the other must have its full exercise.

What, then, is the relation of churches, viewed in the light of the New Testament, to one another?

The vital principle of each church, as of each Christian, is love to Christ; a love which binds churches, as well as individual disciples, to each other in spiritual affection and in efforts for promoting the Saviour's cause. This vital principle, common to all these bodies, brings them, of course, into such union with one another as their mutual interests and their obligations to Christ require. It is a far more effective

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principle of relationship than any external, or conventional, bond.

Their mutual relation, then, is the fraternal one of independent bodies, pervaded by the same spirit, acknowledging the same substantial doctrines, having the same ends and the same interests. Their common spirit, doctrines, ends, and interests will attract them to each other.

§ *Duties involved in this relationship.* — This relationship involves mutual duties, which must correspond to the nature of churches and of their joint relation, and which may, therefore, without any direct instructions in the New Testament, be easily inferred. They may be classed in the following manner:

1. Recognition of fellowship with one another as churches of Christ.

This will consist in the mutual fraternal welcome of members, on all suitable occasions, to participation in worship and other privileges; in the dismission and reception of members to and from each other; in the mutual welcome of each other's pastors and ministers to the services of the pulpit; and in a considerate respect for one another's acts of discipline. Such respect is liable to modification; for if a church were

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invariably bound by the decisions of another with which it is in fellowship, then the independence of the former would be impaired.

2. Mutual aid, as occasions may require; whether by advice, or by assistance in sustaining the institutions of the gospel.

3. Coöperation in regard to matters which require the united efforts of churches.

Coöperation may be more or less extensive, according to the nature and demands of the object to be sought; but the same principle which can combine two churches in one effort, may also combine several, and even all the churches in a region, or a country, which could have communication with one another, whether by messengers or otherwise.

An extended coöperation could hardly exist without a board, or some agency, appointed and perpetuated in a manner satisfactory to the churches concerned; and to prevent any abuse, such an agency must be limited to the precise purpose, or purposes, for which it was formed; all its transactions, aside from such purposes, could claim no countenance from the churches which had chosen to act through its medium. As a result of church independency, also, such

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an agency, or Board, would not be competent to bind any church to a specific course of action against the judgment of that church. The acts of such a body differ from those of a civil legislative body; for this latter is empowered, by the people who appointed it, to provide for its decisions being carried into effect by resources drawn from those whom it represents; its decisions have the force of law. Not so in church matters, for in these, power is not delegated. The real province of a body of delegates, or deputies, or howsoever denominated, appointed by churches which retain their independence, is that of advising and arranging, or of instructing, agreeably to the known or presumed views of the churches, those who are to act in any given capacity; a Board, if one is created, is appointed for transacting affairs which the churches agree to unite in promoting; also, for receiving and properly disbursing pecuniary supplies for the proposed objects. Churches, as being severally independent bodies, still retain the liberty of adopting, or declining, the advice and arrangement, and of contributing or withholding, pecuniary and other aid, according to their own judgment. A body of delegates, or an executive Board, acting for churches which still

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retain their independence, is not legislative; it has no compulsory power; it cannot inflict penalties, or employ force of any kind in case of a church's declining to comply with its results. The churches are not bound to whatever course such a body may have adopted. As to the binding force of the acts of such a body, the utmost which can be consistently maintained is, that the churches which originated its agency, or approved of such agency being created, should feel obligated in honor to meet existing liabilities, while they ought not to encourage the continuance of what they regard as assumption.*

4. Mutual concession in regard to subjects about which diversity of views is consistent with soundness of faith and purity of life.

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* A combination, indefinitely extensive, for Christian objects, might also be secured by forming an association, which should be, strictly, a union of individuals, and not a growth of church action at all, the persons who compose such a union, entering into it, not in their capacity of church members, nor as delegates, or representatives of churches, but as individuals impelled by a desire for the attainment of those objects. Such a union or agency, called by whatever name, would be a medium through which churches and individuals might contribute their aid.

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On all such subjects, diversity of views and practice may exist, while in regard to strictly religious matters, there may be sufficient harmony for cordial union. Any attempt by a church to withhold from another church liberty of opinion and of action in regard to such matters, would be aside from the purposes of the church relation, and inconsistent with mutual independence.

§ *Limitation of these duties.* — These duties have, of course, their limits. As they grow out of the mutual relation, whatever disturbs this tends to impair the corresponding obligation. The relation being founded on a common reception of Christianity in its distinctive principles of belief and conduct, the duties involved in this relation would not be binding towards a church which should depart from those distinctive principles.

Let us suppose, in the case of several churches united in spirit, reciprocating the expressions of their mutual fellowship, and united in religious efforts, that one of them abandons some doctrines which are held by the rest as vital to the gospel, or that it has admitted tenets which are subversive of it. Obviously,

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fellowship is impaired and naturally tends to a termination. The body which has departed from the faith cannot expect the coöperation of the others in promoting its religious sentiments; nor can it be expected to coöperate with them in maintaining and endeavoring to extend their sentiments.

In like manner, should one of such churches depart from the Scriptural view of the ordinances, as maintained by the others, this departure, since it would affect the subject of church membership, even though, possibly, it might not unduly elevate an outward form, would impair fellowship. In this supposition the breach of fellowship might not, at once and necessarily, be so extensive as in the former; but fellowship would be really impaired; because, from the nature of the case, the several bodies would differ materially in constitutional principles.

Whether certain given opinions are subversive of the gospel; and precisely what shades of disbelief, or what departures from outward observances, are sufficient for the declining of fellowship, churches must judge for themselves.

Let us suppose again, on the part of a church, a departure from the righteous mode of life enjoined by

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the gospel. The relation would, in like manner as in the case of departure from the faith, be disturbed and fellowship would cease; because Christianity is a system of holiness, and churches are bodies of disciples who are to practise holiness.

§ *A well proportioned exercise of principles to be observed in the intercourse of churches.* — In churches situated near each other and having frequent occasion to interchange the expressions of fellowship, it is important to maintain a just and well proportioned exercise of each principle required by fraternal and profitable intercourse. One principle should not be allowed to overshadow another, nor to jostle it from its proper place. Independence, for example, is to be maintained; so is fellowship of churches which yet are independent. Independence must not be carried to the extreme of isolation, nor be an impediment to the interchange of expressions of fellowship. Fellowship, on the other hand, must not be cherished in so sensitive a manner as to prove an impediment to independence. Much wisdom and Christian feeling will often be necessary to adjust questions which threaten one or the other of these vital principles; but a due

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regard to each of them, indeed to all principles which must act in combination, will be found necessary to harmonious intercourse and will, generally, succeed in securing it.

Associations of Churches and Ecclesiastical Councils. — The views which have been presented of the mutual relation of churches, shed light on the relative position of other bodies formed for ecclesiastical purposes, such as Associations of Churches and Councils. These bodies originate, either immediately or mediately, from the churches to which the members composing them belong; and they are formed for certain specified, or well understood purposes; more particularly for cultivating mutual fellowship and promoting their mutual spiritual interests. As in a church its officers and its private members act together, so associations and councils should contain in their membership both those who hold office in churches and private members, preserving the joint action of the two departments, or constituent parts.

1. *Associations.* — As we have no precedents in the New Testament for associations of churches, we must be governed, in respect to their proper sphere, by the nature, design and mutual relation of churches.

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Since churches are, each, independent, an association of churches, consisting of members deputed by the several churches for the purpose, has no power beyond that of advice, or of making executive arrangements for matters on which the churches, originating the association, have agreed, or may agree, to act.

Such a body is not to be regarded as a kind of church, formed by the churches and combining in itself the duties and powers of the respective churches which have contributed to its formation.

Questions which properly pertain to the internal affairs of a church, it is best for associations to leave to that church for its own settlement: and if a church need advice, it is better to seek it in a less formal and public way than from such a body, thus avoiding the hazard of extraneous control, and cultivating their own ability for self-government.

2. *Ecclesiastical Councils.* — In the case of ecclesiastical councils, since we have no scriptural precedents for such bodies in the present acceptation of the term, we must be governed in the same manner as in the case of associations of churches.

It is, indeed, common to regard the assembly at

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Jerusalem in which the question respecting circumcision was discussed, Acts xv. 1–31, as an ecclesiastical council. But it widely differed from such a body, in the usual acceptation of the term. It was not composed of delegates from several churches; it was a meeting of the elders and brethren of the church in Jerusalem, and of the apostles then present, for deliberating and deciding on a question referred to them by the church in Antioch. The question was sent to the church in Jerusalem, because that church was believed to be able to give the right answer, since it had from the beginning enjoyed the presence and teaching of apostles, and since some of the apostles were still at Jerusalem. The result, also, of the deliberation was returned in the name of the apostles, the elders and the brethren.

As the churches by which the members of a council are deputed and the church which seeks counsel are all, alike, independent, the proper sphere of such a body is that of an advisory, not authoritative, company. Though the conclusions formed by the wisdom of delegates from several other churches are entitled to much deference, yet the council can claim no dominion over a church in reference to the matter

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which it has presented for consultation. Should a church, in any case, agree to abide by the decision to which such a body may come, as it certainly may for just reasons, the force of the decision is founded on that agreement, not on any authority of the council.

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PART SECOND.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

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PART SECOND.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

For convenience' sake, the term, Christian Ministry, will be used in the remaining portion of this volume; and will denote, agreeably to current usage, pastors and preachers.

The topics which here require attention are: the divine appointment of the Christian Ministry; the different classes of ministers; their mutual relation, their distinctive duties, and the manner of introduction into the ministry.

CHAPTER I.

DIVINE APPOINTMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

In considering this topic, we must bear in mind the thought, which has been already expressed, that the apostolic age was one of development and formation. We must, consequently, recur for instruction on various points, to the closing part of the apostolic era, rather than to its beginning, or than to an intermediate part.

That the office of the Christian ministry, requiring the separation of certain men to its services requiring

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divine appointment, is sustained by the following considerations:

1. As the apostles were specially qualified to guide the churches, the offices which became established by their agency, and in respect to which they gave directions for subsequent times, are to be regarded as in harmony with the Saviour's will.

At the very commencement of Christian operations in Jerusalem, the spontaneous exercise of the gift of teaching, with which some of the Christians were favored, both by natural endowment and by spiritual influences, was adequate to the edification of the assemblies, particularly as apostles, more or fewer, were in attendance. This appears, however, to have been a temporary provision. For, passing from this point of time to the close of the apostle Paul's agency, we find the churches furnished with an office of regular spiritual supervision and teaching; namely, the office of bishop, that is, overseer, named, also, pastor. The apostolic sanction of this arrangement connects it with divine authority.

2. The apostle Paul, in several passages of his epistles, regards the Christian ministry as of divine appointment.

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§ 1. In 1 Cor. xii. 28, the provision for the spiritual welfare of churches is recognized as the appointment of God: — "God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Some of the classes of services, here mentioned, were of a temporary nature, and, accordingly, in due time ceased. Others are necessarily permanent, and endure on the same authority as all enjoyed when all were in exercise. Among these last, is the class of teachers: a term, which here in all probability included the pastors as well as those who taught the gospel without having the pastoral oversight.

§ 2. In 2 Cor. v. 18–20, the terms employed involved the idea of a divine commission for dispensing the gospel, as the appointed scheme for men's reconciliation to God: — "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation. . . Now then we are ambassadors for Christ." This passage cannot be restricted to the apostle himself, nor to his age; for it involves the idea, that the gospel is to

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be dispensed as the method for the reconciliation to God of successive generations of the human race.

§ 3. In Eph. iv. 11–13, the ministry is represented as an appointment of Christ: "He gave some [to be] apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." . . . Christ is here spoken of as giving, assigning, or appointing men for the ministration of the gospel, according to the various departments of this ministration.

§ 4. In Heb. xiii. 17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account," the ministry is regarded as a service appointed by Christ, since it brings those who are occupied in it into special responsibility to Him as "having given" them (Eph. iv. 11) to his people.

§ 5. The current language of the epistles to Timothy associates with the ministry a sacredness which is eminently harmonious with its being a divine appointment, but which could hardly be expected if the office were merely an ordinary providential arrangement, as a growth of circumstances: 1 Tim. iv. 6, vi. 20, 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4, 15, 24. Of a similar character is

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the passage, Acts xx. 28, "Take heed, therefore, to yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers."

§ 6. In 1 Cor. ix. 14, "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel," is an incidental argument for the divine institution of the Christian ministry. If it were not of divine appointment, we could not expect a special divine requirement for the support of those who are occupied in it. The connection in which this passage occurs presents, also, the Christian ministry as a counterpart to the Jewish priesthood in respect to employment in sacred matters, and in respect to the maintenance of those who serve in it, and naturally leads to the idea that this ministry, as well as the Jewish priesthood, was of divine institution.

3. A confirmatory argument may be derived from the appointment of the twelve apostles. Their commission to preach the gospel, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, contemplated, in its very terms, the continuance, while the world should stand, of preaching and of other ministerial services, and therefore involves, as a part of the Saviour's design, a permanent ministerial office.

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CHAPTER II.

CLASSES OF MINISTERS.

The design in this chapter is not, to inquire whether the Christian ministry comprises different orders as to rank and authority. The simplicity which, in the New Testament, marks the organization of churches, is also manifest in respect to the ministry. There may, however, be different classes of ministers, without gradations of rank and power. At the earliest period of Christian churches, evidently, a great variety of operations was necessary for the establishment and extension of the gospel, and for the welfare and efficiency of the churches. Diversity of needed labors occasioned different classes of laborers.

§ *Official terms not used in the New Testament with special care.* — It is an interesting fact that the New Testament takes no particular care in the use of official words, in reference to the public servants of Christ. The inspired writers had no solicitude in

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respect to dignity, as connected with any sphere of Christian activity. Though, in consequence of this, we may be left in some degree of obscurity, and it may never be possible to settle some nice questions, we yet hereby attain the far more important sentiment, that concern for personal or official distinction should have no place among the ministers of Jesus Christ.

As illustrating the fact just mentioned, the expression *prophets and teachers* in Acts xiii. 1, embraces Saul of Tarsus as well as Barnabas, and several others who took an active part in preaching the gospel. In Acts xiv. 4, the term *apostles* is used with reference to both Paul and Barnabas; but not, probably, in that specific sense in which it belongs to the twelve; for that Barnabas was in that sense an apostle, we have no sufficient evidence.* In a similar manner the

* Neander remarks in his Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles, page 94, Note. — The name apostle "in a general sense was applied to others [besides the twelve] who published divine truth in an extensive sphere of labor."

Yet in 1 Cor. ix. 5, 6, Paul may seem to associate Barnabas with himself as an apostle. May it not be, however, that the close intimacy between Paul and Barnabas, the high estima-

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word *elder* is applied to the apostles Peter and John, 1 Pet. v. 1; 2 John 1, 3 John 1, as well as to the ordinary ministers of any particular churches. The original word for *deacon*, also, is familiarly used, with frequency, in its etymological sense of *servant*, *one who renders service*, and is translated *minister*, when it does not specifically relate to the office of a deacon. In this sense, it is applied to the apostles, as being ministers or servants of Christ, as in 1 Cor. iii. 5; and even to false teachers, 2 Cor. xi. 15, as being ministers of Satan.

§ *Two passages, mentioning the classes of ministers.* — Two passages occur in which the apostle Paul names different classes of ministers; and yet these two have not a minute agreement.

In 1 Cor. xii. 28, he says, "God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets;

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tion in which he was held among Christians, and his devotion to the work of spreading the gospel, naturally led Paul, without a thought of official distinction, to mention him in this connection? In the same manner he also mentions "the brethren of the Lord," who were certainly not included among the apostles, however much respect was felt toward them on account of their relation to Jesus.

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thirdly, teachers." He then proceeds to name various miraculous gifts, and other agencies, consisting of what we might call sanctified natural endowments for the welfare and usefulness of a church.

In Eph. iv. 11, he also says, Christ "gave some [to be] apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

§ *Ephesians* iv. 11, *adopted as giving the fullest view.* — This fullest enumeration by the apostle, of the classes of ministers, may therefore be adopted as giving the scriptural view.

1. *Apostles.* Of these four classes, then, the first mentioned, the apostles, were endowed by special divine influences, with peculiar gifts and powers, qualifying them to be authoritative teachers of the Christian religion and guides of the churches. They evidently occupied a position, and were charged with a responsibility, peculiar to themselves.

§ *The apostles had no successors in their apostolic relation.* — They were not to have successors in their special office of apostleship; as appears from the following considerations:

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§ 1. No intimation is given of any design or provision on the part of the Saviour, or of the apostles themselves, for supplying their places.

During the life-time of the apostles, they may have, indeed, employed certain ministers as their assistants to perform toward some churches, a part similar to that which they themselves performed. This the apostle Paul did in the case of Timothy, as we learn from his language in 1 Tim. i. 3; "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine," &c. Also in the case of Titus; as he says in Tit. i. 5; "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." But they did not provide for a continued representation after their decease, of the apostolic office. That the apostles, or any one of them, appointed or regarded as necessary successors to themselves, would be a gratuitous assumption. Even if Paul had appointed Timothy and Titus to continue after his decease, in a sort of general oversight of the churches, — a gratuitous assumption, — there is no valid evidence that Timothy and Titus had, or were to have, successors in such a capacity.

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§ 2. The qualifications of an apostle were incompatible with continued succession in the office.

In addition to the special divine influences fitting them to be the authoritative teachers of the Christian religion, a personal knowledge of Christ, and an ability to bear unexceptionable testimony to his resurrection from the dead, were essential requisites. At the election of Matthias to the apostleship for supplying the place of the apostate Judas, Acts i. 21, 22, this knowledge of Christ and ability to bear witness of his resurrection, was distinctly declared by the apostle Peter to be indispensable. Hence the apostle Paul appealed to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. ix. 1; "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"

Moreover, according to 2 Cor. xii. 12, the endowment of miraculous power was necessary.

§ 3. *The very design of the apostolic office, also, involves its temporary duration.* — It was designed for establishing the gospel in various places by men bearing credentials of a divine appointment and being themselves standards of the Christian faith, thus having authority to settle definitely the doctrines of the Christian religion. The purpose of the office having

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been answered, the office ceases; there is no further need of it. Since the death of the apostles, their inspired writings in the New Testament occupy their place. These writings are to us, for the communication of facts and the teaching of Christian doctrines, what the apostles themselves were to those who, without such documents, received the gospel from them and could resort to them personally for instruction.

2. *Prophets.* The prophets, next mentioned, were also under a peculiar influence of the Holy Spirit. They were favored, occasionally at least, with immediate revelations, so as to foretell future events, and were particularly endowed with requisite gifts for the edification of churches by their earnest exhibition of divine truth in regard to Christian conduct. In Acts xi. 27, 28, mention is made of certain prophets, one of whom predicted "that there should be great dearth;" and this same prophet, we are told in xxi. 10, 11, predicted that the Jews at Jerusalem would bind Paul and "deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." In 1 Cor. xiv. 3, 4, 22, the edification of believers in religious character is mentioned as a chief purpose of the prophetic gift. The prophets in the New Testament resembled the ancient prophets, not

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so much in predicting future events, as in an earnest and forceful presentation of religious truth for moving others and in a fervid expression of their own religious emotions on interesting occasions. The use of the word *prophesy* in Luke i. 67, and Acts ii. 17, 18, exemplifies this remark.

Such a class of ministers would be eminently serviceable in the incipient state of Christian affairs, and was a natural result of the abundant divine influence imparted to the early converts. It well accorded with the free interchange of thought and feeling which characterized the occasions of worship and of religious intercourse in the earliest period of the Christian religion, and tended to promote in a healthful manner that unconstrained interchange. The fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians furnishes an example of this familiar and social mode of worship and of the apostle's views in regard to the exercise of the New Testament prophetic gift.

This class, as dependent on the extraordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, was also for temporary duration.

§ *Danger of imposition guarded against.* — The danger of imposition from men unwarrantably laying

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claim to this prophetic gift was obviated by the gift, with which some were endowed, of "discerning of spirits," 1 Cor. xii. 10, that is of discriminating between the real possessors of it and mere pretenders.

3. *Evangelists.* — Evangelists are next mentioned. These were occupied in preaching the gospel as itinerants without a settled location. Philip, called in Acts xxi. 8, "the evangelist," appears, Acts viii. 5, 40, to have been occupied in going from place to place, disseminating the gospel. Timothy, also, was employed in "the work of an evangelist," 2 Tim. iv. 5. As he was, in his ministerial employment particularly an assistant of the apostle, he would necessarily be engaged in various places, preaching the gospel and establishing in the faith newly formed churches.

The sphere of an evangelist well corresponds with that of a missionary, whether as contributing to the establishment, in faith and efficiency, of comparatively feeble churches, or preaching the gospel among the destitute in a Christian country, or in unevangelized parts of the world.

This view agrees with the etymological sense of the word evangelist, namely, a preacher of the gospel.*

* Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History, Book V. ch. 10,

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4. *Pastors and Teachers.* — The remaining class consists of those who are pastors and teachers. From the structure, in the original Greek, of the passage which we are now considering, these two epithets designate one and the same class of men; and they denote those who were the spiritual guides and overseers of the churches. They were the religious teachers to whom the twofold care of superintendence and instruction in churches was entrusted. The term *elders* was also applied to them, as occupying an official station of prominence and respect; and, as being charged with the cares of supervision or oversight, they were denominated, according to our English version, *bishops*.

PERMANENT CLASSES OF MINISTERS. — Of these four classes, two, the apostles and the prophets, specially needed at the establishment of the gospel in the world, and endowed with extraordinary gifts, were to be temporary. The other two, evangelists and pastors, are, from the nature of the case, of permanent duration.

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applies the term *evangelist* to certain preachers, who in the latter part of the second century, after the apostolic example, devoted themselves to the extension of the gospel in the eastern parts of the world. See also Book III., ch. 37.

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LAY-PREACHERS. — From 1st Corinthians, twelfth chapter, also from Romans xii. 4–7, and from the very nature of Christianity, it is obvious that whatever abilities and opportunities for serving the cause of Christ a disciple may possess, his duty is thereby indicated. If he have the faculty of addressing men on religious subjects and opportunities for maintaining the study of divine truth and becoming habitually imbued with its spirit, and for making himself useful in communicating it, it is his duty and privilege thus to act, whether in public religious assemblies, or in more private collections of Christians and others for social worship, though he may not judge it his duty to be occupied exclusively, or mainly, in the work of the ministry. Thus in harmony with the activity of a special ministry, Christianity furnishes a sphere also for an occasional ministry, and for lay-preachers.*

* In the diversified employments required by the cause of Christ, besides the preaching of the gospel and the pastoral care of a church, will be services collateral with these. When ministers of the gospel become occupied in such services, they may be considered, if any technical designation should be deemed desirable, as occasional ministers.

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CHAPTER III.

MUTUAL RELATION OF MINISTERS.

In view of the simplicity, in official arrangements, which characterized the apostles' times, and of the fact that of the two permanent classes of ministers, the evangelists were mainly occupied in disseminating the gospel, and the pastors and teachers, denominated also, in our English version, bishops, were connected with individual churches, and not, officially, with churches in a combined capacity, as forming an aggregate; the mutual relation of ministers would seem to be that of equals, laboring at various points for the same object, and having no occasion for thinking of official rank in respect to one another. Moreover, the easy transition, according to circumstances, from the position of an evangelist, to that of a pastor, or of a pastor to that of an evangelist, indicates the essential equality, so far as rank is concerned, of the fellow-laborers in these two spheres.

It might seem superfluous, then, to inquire whether

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the Christian ministry consists of different orders, or ranks, relatively superior and inferior. Circumstances in the Christian world, however, make such an inquiry desirable; for diversity of ranks prevails extensively.

§ *Relation of the terms elder, or presbyter, and bishops, to one another.* — This enquiry resolves itself into the following: Whether the term *elder*, or, when used in reference to the ministry, its equivalent, *presbyter*, and the term, *bishop*, were significant of different ranks in the ministry, sustaining relations of inferiority and superiority, or were only different names for the same office.

What, then, is the scripture-use of these terms as related to each other?

In Acts xx. 17, Paul is said to have sent to Ephesus for "the *elders* of the church." In his address to them, he bids them (verse 28) "take heed to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*," or, as the original word in various other passages is translated, *bishops*. The words elder and overseer, or bishop, were here applied to the same men.

In the epistle to Titus, i. 5, the apostle directs him to

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"ordain *elders* in every city," and proceeds to mention the qualifications of an elder. These qualifications are necessary to an elder, he adds, verse 7, because "a *bishop* must be blameless;" thus using the two words interchangeably.*

§ *No officer between the bishop and the deacon.*— The New Testament, also, makes no mention of an office intermediate between that of a bishop and that of a deacon.

In 1 Tim. iii. 8, the apostle, having mentioned the qualifications of a bishop, passes immediately to those of deacons. Had there been an order of ministers, denominated presbyters or elders, in distinction from the bishop, could the apostle have failed to mention the qualifications for so important an office? But if bishops were the presbyters, or elders, his manner was the only possible one.

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*In noticeable harmony with the passages cited above is 1 Pet. v. 1, 2, "The elders which are among you I exhort. . . . feed the flock of God which is among you, *taking the oversight*, επισκοπουντες thereof." Elders, then, were charged with the duties of oversight, or held the office of επισκοπος, a bishop.

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In Phil. i. 1. also, only bishops and deacons are mentioned.†

§ *Origin of the terms elder and bishop, and shade of difference between them.* — As a signification in common belongs to these terms, it may be worth while to remark that, in the opinion of judicious critics, the official term rendered *elder*, was of Jewish origin; while the equivalent term rendered *overseer*, or *bishop*, arose among the Gentile converts, who selected from their own language and usuages a term equivalent to the Jewish.

It is worthy of note, also, that, so far as any shade of difference in signification between them is concerned, the word presbyter, or elder, was indicative of the respect, or honor, due to the office, and the word bishop of the service which the office required.

§ *Result as to the mutual relation of ministers.* — The mutual relations of Christian ministers, then, is that of brethren occupying an equal official station.

† The Syriac "Scriptures, translated in the beginning of the second century, everywhere render *episcopos* (translated *bishop* in English), by the word *presbyter*, or *priest*." "Laurie's Mountain Nestorians, p. 147.

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The office of the ministry is not divided into gradations of dignity and power. Still, as church-members, holding to each other an equal fraternal relation, cannot but differ from each other in efficiency and influence through their unequal degrees of intelligence, piety and activity, and through various circumstances, so ministers, equal in point of office, will, through their indefinite variety as to personal endowments and circumstances, without any infringement of this equality, differ indefinitely from each other, in point of influence, usefulness, and public esteem.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE DISTINCTIVE PROVINCE OF MINISTERS.

In considering the extent of the power which belongs to church officers, and particularly to ministers, in Part I. ch. iii., it was shown that ecclesiastical power resides in the individual churches themselves, not in their officers, nor in any select body as distinct from a church. When at an early date church business was either assumed by the eldership, or was transferred to it, or in some insensible way came to be considered as belonging to it officially, either of these was a departure from the original method. This departure led the way to the virtual merging of individual churches into aggregates of churches, and to the concentration of church business in synods or councils composed of bishops, as an order of clergy distinct from presbyters; and thus, eventually, ecclesiastical power became engrossed by bishops, while churches themselves, as individual and independent communities conducting their own affairs, disappeared, except

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in the form of heretical or sectarian bodies, not acknowledged by the dominant ecclesiastical authorities.*

§ *Ministers and churches act conjointly.* — In truth, then, according to the models in the New Testament, ministers *as such* are not to act independently of churches, but in connection with them. The New Testament does not represent churches as being in subjection to their elders, without conjoint action of their own, but as self-governing bodies composed of both private members and officers who jointly act under law to Christ.

§ *Some services belong particularly to ministers.* Yet, ministers have a distinctive province. Certain services are devolved on them, as distinct from other members. They have a responsibility which others have not.

When it is said that ministers have a distinctive

* "It was an evil, that the communities," that is, the churches, "were excluded from all participation in these assemblies; that, at length, the bishops came to constitute the sole power in them, and, by the union which these synods enabled them to enter into with one another, made themselves more powerful every day." Neander's Church History, vol. 1. p. 207.

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province, or sphere of duty, it is not meant that, in the absence or the lack of a minister, these duties must be left unperformed; for, when occasion requires, other members, whether holding office or not, should, agreeably to the very nature of Christianity, supply the consequent lack of service according to their endowments. Wherever special occasions arise, it is in harmony with the spirit of Christianity that they be met as special occasions, and be provided for in the best manner possible. That there is a distinctive province for ministers is, therefore, necessarily held with modification.

Still less is it meant, that the services which appropriately belong to ministers, have in themselves such a sacredness that they would be unacceptable to God and useless to man, if rendered by persons not ceremonially and officially set apart for those services. The value of any religious services comes not from any peculiar sacredness attaching to the person, or the office of him who renders them; but from the truths which such services inculcate on the recipient, and from the accompanying influence of the Holy Spirit whose operations are not restricted by, or to, certain forms. "God is a Spirit;" Christians are made

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"kings and priests unto God," being "a royal priesthood, a holy nation;" and therefore, when occasion requires, any service which would ordinarily be rendered by a minister, may be rendered by another person, and any outward rite, if the providence of God hinder its performance, is omitted without hazard to the soul.

Yet, as human beings are composed of soul and body, so the religion of Christ has its outward arrangements, as well as its inward spirit. It provides for the more regular and profitable performance of certain things by making them the duty, in ordinary circumstances, of certain men. "God has set some in the church" for certain duties which he has not assigned to others; and, in ordinary circumstances, those duties do not belong to the sphere of others.

§ *Direct relation to Christ, both of ministers and of churches.* — In order to attain a just apprehension of the distinctive province of ministers, we must consider them as holding a direct relation to Christ, separate from that which they hold to churches; so that in some things they are responsible, just as every Christian is in his personal capacity, to Him rather than to

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churches. So, too, churches have a direct responsibility to Christ.

A correct view of the relation, on the part of a minister and of a church, respectively, to Christ and to each other, furnishes a safeguard both against arrogance and against submission, on the part both of ministers and of churches, and cherishes that fraternal and yet mutually deferential spirit which should actuate both churches and ministers.

In considering the distinctive province of ministers, it will be best, for the sake of avoiding all extravagance or undue prominence on either side, to view ministers and churches conjointly in regard to the particulars which belong to this province. For while ministers have, in these particulars, a responsibility directly to Christ rather than to churches, churches also, from their very nature and design, have, in these same things, a responsibility directly to Christ.

§ *A minister's relation to Christ not inconsistent with a regard to the welfare of a church.* — It should, also, be said that while ministers are, in certain respects, to be regarded as servants *of Christ*, responsible to him and not to churches, still so vi-

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tally connected is the ministerial work with the real interests of churches, and so injurious would be an erroneous course on the part of ministers in reference to churches, that minister would subject himself to just suspicion, who should willingly imperil a church's interests through a professed supreme regard to the authority of Christ. He might mistake self-will for self-sacrificing devotion to Christ. Clearly, a minister may, in the sober judgment of the church which he has engaged to serve, so deviate from the principles of the gospel, in their application to its real interests, as to incur its disapproval.

§ *Services included in the province of ministers.*

1. The preaching of the gospel and the pastoral care belong, eminently, to the distinctive province of ministers.

The term *gospel*, in such a connection, is equivalent to *the system of Christianity*, and thus the preaching of the gospel includes in its compass the public teaching of the religion of Christ. The minister of a church is such a preacher and teacher, particularly to to those with whom he is officially connected. To the office of the ministry belongs, also, the pastoral care.

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The view, thus presented, is required by the following considerations:

One of the several classes of ministers, mentioned in Eph. iv. 11, includes, as we have seen, pastors and teachers.

2. A succession of men for the preaching of the gospel, until the end of the world, was contemplated in our Lord's commission to his apostles, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

3. The instructions of Paul to Timothy and Titus make it clear, that a special responsibility for the pastoral care and the preaching of the gospel is laid on ministers.

4. The very nature of this work requires, for its regular and efficient performance, a class of men separated for this purpose and the other kindred purposes of the ministry. Without an official provision for the regular dispensation of Christian truth, the gospel would not accomplish its design.

§ *A preacher of the gospel responsible directly to Christ.* — In this department of duty, a minister is responsible directly to Christ, both because he is the servant of Christ, and because he is to derive the in-

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structions he communicates, not from a church, but from Christ through the Scriptures. He is, therefore, responsible to Christ alone for the doctrines he inculcates, or allows to be inculcated, on his people.

§ *Corresponding responsibility of the Church.* — While ministers are charged with the duty of preaching the gospel and of the pastoral care, churches have a corresponding responsibility.

1. It is incumbent on a church to furnish a suitable maintenance, if possible, for its minister in the proper discharge of his office.

2. In respect, also, to the substance of a minister's preaching, a church has responsibility to Christ; for it is a church *of Christ.* It is bound, by its responsibility to Christ, to discountenance doctrines which disagree with the Scriptures, as well as to uphold what it conceives to be Christian truth.

3. Likewise, in case of being destitute of a minister, a church is charged with the duty of otherwise providing for the public presentation of the gospel, as it best can; whether, for instance, by procuring temporary service from a minister, or by social religious exercises, or by encouraging a suitable member to conduct the services of worship.

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II. In a somewhat modified sense, the administration of baptism belongs to the province of ministers.

§ *Lack of sufficiently definite information in the New Testament to frame a rule.* — So far as the New Testament gives us information, it favors the limitation of this service to ministers; but the New Testament does not furnish instruction, nor practical details, respecting it, sufficient to warrant its exclusive limitation to that class. Neither the genius of Christianity, nor the design of the sacred writers, required precision in assigning to certain men, or certain classes, the performance of external and manual services. The gospel requires, that "all things be done decently and in order"; but, whether baptism was administered by an apostle, or by an elder of a church, or, if in accordance with common consent, by a private Christian of eminent gravity, between whose character and any solemn observance there would be no incongruity, the spirit of the New Testament would not be violated. The Apostle Paul chose not to baptize, 1 Cor. i. 14–17; but left this service, ordinarily in all probability, to be performed by other suitable persons. The Apostle Peter, also, in the case of Cornelius, Acts x, committed

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the administration of baptism to other hands. Compared with the weighty cares and responsibilities of the apostles, the administration of a rite held a subordinate place, since, if administered with due solemnity, it could as well be performed by their assistants, or occasional attendants.

§ *Limitation of this service to ministers a reasonable conclusion.* — Still, it is reasonable to regard the administration of baptism, in ordinary circumstances, as belonging to the distinctive province of ministers:

1. From our Lord's having included it in his commission to the apostles, Matt. xxviii. 18–20.

As the commission involves the continuance of baptism, it is a reasonable conclusion, that baptism is to be administered by men sustaining an official relation corresponding, in part, to that of the apostles; that is the relation of preachers of the gospel. The apostles were commissioned to disciple the nation and to baptize; the two duties were conjoined. So, in reference to other servants of Christ, the duties of preaching for the conversion of men, and of baptizing them, we may reasonably consider as united. Since the commission

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involves the continuance of a class of men to preach the gospel, so to baptize those who become disciples is reasonably included among the duties of this class.

2. From the lack of evidence that baptism was administered originally by other Christians.

While we have evidence that it was administered by other ministers than the apostles, as in the case of Philip the Evangelist, Acts viii. 12, 39, we have no evidence that it was administered by men in an unofficial position.

In the case of Cornelius the centurion, related in the 10th of Acts, it is indeed sufficiently clear that the Apostle Peter did not baptize, but employed the service of one or more of the brethren who accompanied him, Acts, x. 23, 45, 48. But whether these brethren were official, or unofficial, men does not appear. Perhaps they were special attendants on the apostle, or assistants; since we learn from Acts xi. 12, that they were still in his company when he went up to Jerusalem. From lack of information, however, no reliable statement can be made, and no reliable conclusion drawn. Even if they were all private brethren, and one of them administered the ordinance, the apostle's direction would be a sufficient warrant for that occa-

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sion. A general rule, however, might not be constituted by such a case; expect so far as this, that circumstances may, at times, be such as to render it entirely proper for private Christians to administer baptism, particularly as there is nothing in the nature, or the intent, of the ordinance to hinder its being administered by unofficial persons, when providential circumstances so require.

3. The limitation of this service to a certain class would result from a regard to regularity.

"God is not the author of confusion, but of peace," 1 Cor. xiv. 33; and confusion would inevitably result from the administration of baptism by Christians indiscriminately.

A regard to regularity would require a limitation of this service, but not necessarily a limitation of it, strictly, to ministers. In the absence of information, or of prescription, on the subject, it is credible that originally, the administration of baptism belonged to the entire eldership, or official body, of a church; and as the deacons were a part of this official body, the administration of baptism may have been considered appropriate to their position, particularly in unusual circumstances.

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§ *Baptism is administered on the administrator's responsibility to Christ.* — In confirmation of the view that the administration of baptism belongs, with such modifications as have been mentioned, to the province of ministers, and is performed on the administrator's responsibility to Christ, and not on his responsibility to a church, it is to be considered, that a believer is baptized, not in compliance with the directions of a church, but in compliance with the direction of Christ to baptize those who become disciples. Matt. xxviii. 19. It is to Him, then, that the administrator is responsible, whether the evidence, that the person has become a disciple, is obtained directly from the person himself, or indirectly through the reliable testimony of a church or of others.

Accordingly, when a person is baptized, he does not thereby become a member of any particular church, but makes a profession of discipleship to Christ, Acts ii. 38, viii. 16, x. 48; also, Gal. iii. 27; likewise, by that act he professes a reception of the gospel, viewed as a distinct system of religion having, as its central element, a practical faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Matt. xxviii. 19; also, by baptism, he professes his entering on a new life, a life of righte-

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ousness, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, which cardinal facts enter into a comprehensive view of this ordinance, Rom. vi. 3, 4, Col. ii. 12. Baptism, being thus a personal profession, agreeably to the Saviour's appointment, of discipleship and a recognizing of the obligations connected with discipleship, introduces a person into the universal company of Christ's visible followers, and thus puts him into a proper state for being welcomed into membership with some particular church. It is not, then, an act for which a church is responsible. So far from its being a church-act, circumstances may often not only justify, but require its administration without consulting any church, as in the case of Philip and the eunuch, and the case of Cornelius the centurion, and many supposable, and actually occurring cases.

§ *Relation which a church sustains to the administration of baptism.* — But, as baptism is ordinarily in harmony with the Saviour's plan, immediately followed by entrance into some church, it is of course proper, when connection with a church is expected, that the minister and that church should coöperate in the preliminaries of this transaction, so that on the

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part of that church, also, there should be readiness to admit the baptized person into membership: for, admission into any particular church should take place by an act of that church; and in all the steps leading to that result, there ought to be harmony of action between all concerned. Else, the Saviour's plan of having his followers associated in churches might be, in numerous instances, disregarded; and many, baptized in his name, might remain without the salutary influence of church-connection, and without the opportunities for promoting his cause, which church connection furnishes.

Thus, while in ordinary circumstances, baptism is to be administered on the administrator's responsibility, yet such, usually, is the relation of this act to a church, that a pastor will, of course, seek the coöperation of the church, so that membership may at once take place after the avowal, in baptism, of discipleship to Christ. The distinction, however, is readily apprehended, between the avowal of discipleship and the admission to membership in a particular church.

III. In a similarly modified sense, action in the final admission of men into the ministry belongs to the distinctive province of ministers.

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§ *Notices respecting this topic in the New Testament are few.* — Information on this point, in the New Testament, is meagre; and it was, probably, in the earliest times, a subject that did not require much preciseness. The free, yet fraternal and conscientious, spirit of Christian leaders in those times could dispense with much formality, as to the mode of entering the public service of Christ, and could, at sometimes, take one course and, at others, another, as circumstances appeared to direct. Still, if we find satisfactory proof that men, already in the ministry performed an important part in introducing others into the office, we are warranted in regarding such action as furnishing a precedent for subsequent times.

The few notices in the New Testament concerning admission to the ministry, show that on such occasions, sometimes apostles and their assistants acted; and, at other times, a presbytery, or company of elders, acted.

In Acts xiv. 23, Paul and Barnabas are said to have ordained, that is, appointed, elders in every church which they had founded. Some of these were men who are elsewhere named bishops, pastors: they were ministers of the gospel.

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In Titus i. 5, the apostle says, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain [appoint, set in office] elders in every city as I had appointed thee."

In 1 Tim. iv. 14, the action of a presbytery, that is, a body of elders, in such service is mentioned: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

The presbytery here mentioned may have been a company of elders met from various quarters, whether for this occasion, or for other purposes, or without concert; or, it may have been the eldership of a particular church, and comprised all the members of the official body, those who were not pastors and teachers, as well as those who were. So far as this latter view contributes to the formation of a rule, the rule would be that the body which acts in the final admission of men to the ministry, should contain other official men besides ministers. If the presbytery were a company of elders, in the strict sense of the word, as equivalent to *bishops*, then the passage would, so far as it goes to form a rule, favor the idea, that the final act, in the admission of men into the ministry,

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belongs to the distinctive province of the ministry. But the question how this presbytery was constituted, cannot, through lack of information, be definitely settled.

§ *Propriety of ministerial action on such occasions.* — That ministers should have a special part in the admission of others into the ministry, seems very appropriate. It may well be believed, that they feel a special responsibility and a special solicitude in regard to the purity of the ministry, and that they are qualified to judge of the requisites for this service.

§ *Province of a church in regard to a person's entering the ministry.* — The province of a church, also, in this matter, must not be overlooked. Evidently, a church, from the true idea of its design and mode of action has, as well as the ministry, a responsibility in reference to it. Since the ministerial office holds so important a place in the maintenance and diffusion of the gospel, — objects which churches are designed to promote, — churches have by right and by their responsibility to Christ, a vital connection with the entrance of men into the ministry. If not, and if the ministry were to perpetuate itself without

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the fraternal coöperation of churches in respect to admission into it, a system might come into operation which would, eventually, bring men into the ministry without their being even church-members previously to their forming the purpose of entering on it, and without their possessing any spiritual qualifications for a sacred employment. Then, again, when we consider the independence and self-government of a church, some right of action in a matter of so vital importance is essential to a church, and some real acts on its part, involving its approval and sanction, would seem requisite to a member's entrance on the ministry.

Ordinarily, too, a church is favorably situated for forming a correct judgment as to the type of a person's piety, and his incipient fitness for this sphere of service; and the judgment of a church will, ordinarily, prove a good basis of action with reference to his full admission into it.

§ *Preliminary acts of a church in reference to this subject.* — A church, then, perceiving that a member has endowments both of piety and of intellect for ministerial service, encourages him, whether formally or otherwise, in his cultivation of his powers.

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It thus approves, and may formally express its approbation of his taking steps preparatory to becoming a minister, and contributes to the result of his being recognized in due time and in the appropriate manner, as a minister of the gospel.

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CHAPTER V.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MINISTRY.

It is the purpose of this chapter, to present more in detail the process which the nature of churches and the relation sustained to them by ministers indicate, with reference to a person's entrance into the ministry, and to notice the ceremonial act with which his introduction into this sphere of duty is visibly consummated.

I. *The process of entrance into the ministry.* — In reference to this process, it will be advantageous to keep in view both the membership and the official body of the earliest churches: since we shall thus more easily discover, not only the manner in which a member would give indications of possessing the elements, at least, of fitness for the public service of Christ, but, also, the distinctive province of ministers and of churches, and their coöperation in regard to this matter.

Those churches had a body of elders on whom

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all the official concerns, both spiritual and temporal, were devolved. This eldership, or company of elders, would be larger or smaller, according to circumstances and to the endowments of the church-members; but it was adequate to all official duties.

We will suppose, now, the case of a person in one of those early churches, led by the devout bent of his mind to take an active part in prayer and addresses on occasions of worship, or in any other ways to show an adaptation to the work of public religious exhortation or instruction. His efforts of this nature are favorably received, and he increases in his ability for usefulness. At length, whether by himself making known his impressions on the subject, or by the suggestion of others, the question arises, whether he is not a suitable person to be admitted into the ministry. The church members approve of such a measure; the elders also approve of it; and he is, consequently, welcomed to the work of the ministry with more or less formality, agreeably to custom or the prevalent sense of propriety. The fact of his being thus placed in the ministry, that is, by the members and elders of the church of which he is a member, would be sufficient to secure for him, in addition, the fellowship of other churches and ministers.

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§ *No details in the New Testament relative to this topic.* — The statement just made, is intended to show the process of this matter in accordance with the nature and design of the earliest churches. If the question arise, whether any facts are recorded in the New Testament showing that entrance into the ministry in the earliest times, took place just in that manner, the answer must be in the negative. Details of this kind are not given. We are left, in forming our view on this topic, to what may be considered the natural and necessary operation of principles inherent in the church-constitution.

At the same time we must not forget the suggestion which was made in Part I. chapter III. p. of this volume, that, at the commencement of Christian operations anywhere, and at any time, the ministers who have been personally concerned in gathering a church may be the most suitable persons to select from it individuals for office, and may, in harmony of course with the feelings of that church, appoint them to offices. A church, however, provided at first with its officers in this way, would in its progress become competent to manage all its own affairs, and then the principles which are inherent in its nature and design will find

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their appropriate action, and such special service, adapted only to a commencing point and required by the present exigency, will be no longer requisite.

§ *The early churches in reference to this matter.* In those of the earliest churches which, as those in Philippi and in Ephesus, had more bishops than one, as well as several deacons, introduction to the ministry was, doubtless, a matter of much simplicity. Not only were the members and the eldership personally cognizant of the preliminary activities of an individual, which marked him as suitable for this employment, but also, as more than one were occupying the position of ministers, their action in regard to his admission would indicate fellowship on the part of ministers. All the important principles, by which admission into the ministry might require to be regulated, would be preserved, without passing beyond the bounds of the particular church itself to which the person belonged.

In the present day, too, the ordination, or the public setting apart, of a church-member to the ministry by the pastor alone, in accordance with the wishes of the church, would certainly not be an essential departure

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from correct principles. It would, however, be in danger of failing in one respect, which was less in danger of failing at the earliest times, and which ought not to be put to hazard, namely, the fellowship of other ministers.*

§ *Regard due to the opinions of ministers respecting a candidate for the ministry.* — It follows from the preceding view, that the opinions of ministers, on the question of a candidate's being ordained as a minister, should be held of special importance; particularly, since with them rests the public act which shall indicate their devout and cordial commendation of the

* This important particular is happily preserved in modern times by a minister's presenting the right hand of fellowship, in behalf of the council, to the person set apart, accompanied with a pertinent address. This act is expressive, ordinarily, of a widely cherished fellowship on the part of ministers and of church-members; and conveys, not only to the person himself, an assurance of sympathy and coöperation, but, also, to the congregation he is to serve and to the community at large, an assurance that he enters on his public work with the cordial approval and commendation of those who know what the service is, and who have themselves been held in public esteem as ministers of the gospel.

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person to God, and their ministerial fellowship with him.

True as this may be, still, since the ordination of a man to the ministry is generally connected with his becoming the pastor of a church, or with his going forth to preach the gospel, and as, in both cases, the fellowship of neighboring churches, and the fraternal confidence of churches in general, is eminently necessary to the designed results of ministerial services, a council, assembled at a church's request for consultation and concurrence with it on such an occasion, should not fail to represent the churches as well as the ministry, so that union may exist, on the part of both, in opinion and in action.

§ *A church the ultimate source of power in this matter.* — But while, in ordinary circumstances among Christians, the action of ministers is necessary, in conjunction with the previous action of a church, to the regular introduction of a man into the ministry, still, so truly is a church the ultimate source of power, and such is the genius of church-constitution, according to the New Testament, that, if circumstances should make it necessary, a church-member might become,

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to all intents and purposes, a minister by the action of that church solely. Such circumstances can be imagined; and they would amount to what might be called a new setting in operation of the Christian cause, a planting of the gospel. Such cases will, however, very seldom occur. The case is supposed here, merely to illustrate the genius of the gospel, and to show where, in ecclesiastical matters, the ultimate power on earth resides. It illustrates, too, a cardinal and wide-sweeping principle in the gospel; namely, that holiness is not dependent on circumstances. Neither churches, nor the ministry, depend for their genuineness on any outward connection with churches, or with the ministry, of any former age. Their genuineness depends on conformity to the principles which regulated the apostles and the first churches.

Still, extraordinary cases, exigencies truly so called, do not furnish a rule for ordinary cases; or, rather, do not warrant irregularity in ordinary cases. The Apostle Paul directed, 1 Cor. xiv. 40, that "all things should be done decently and in order"; and ministers and churches best show their wisdom and conscientiousness by adhering to a proper order in conducting their affairs, when not placed in circumstances of exigency.

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II. The inquiry is now in place, whether any ceremonial act is to be performed on the occasion of a person's admission into the ministry.

§ *Imposition of hands.* — The New Testament contains some evidence, that the imposition of hands on the candidate, by men already in the ministry, was practised, in the age of the apostles, on such occasions.

In 1 Tim. iv. 14, we read, "Neglect not the gift which is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," that is, of the eldership. In 2 Tim. i. 6, the apostle also reminds Timothy, to "stir up the gift of God, which," he adds, "is in thee by the putting on of my hands."

Whether two distinct acts are referred to in these passages, or whether the apostle was himself one of the elders composing the presbytery, who laid hands on Timothy, we have not the means of determining.

§ *Objections against practising the imposition of hands.* — Objections may be raised against this observance, on two grounds:

1. It was employed on other occasions, as a some-

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what common practice; and, even in respect to ministers of the gospel, it was not restricted to their entrance on this service.

2. It was employed by the apostles, as a symbol expressing the imparting, through them, of the miraculous influences of the Holy Spirit.

§ *Replies.* — The first objection has no decisive force. It does not lie against the use of this act at a person's being set part to the ministry, it only avails against restricting it to that occasion.

The second is not conclusive; since the act did not, in ancient times, invariably symbolize the imparting of the Holy Spirit, or always include this among the ideas it conveyed.

§ *True idea conveyed by the imposition of hands.* From an examination of scripture-passages in which the imposition of hand is mentioned, it appears to have been an emblematic act, expressive of the bestowal of endowments and blessings on the person thus indicated; the bestowal being either actually granted, or sought for in special prayer. Whether these endowments and blessings were of a common,

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or of a miraculous character, was dependent on circumstances.

Sometimes, it signified a ceremonial transfer of guilt, or of liability to punishment; in such instances, the idea of communicating to another is obvious.

§ *Instances of the laying on of hands.* — In Gen. xlviii. 14–20, we read of the patriarch Jacob's laying hands on the heads of Joseph's sons, in connection with his benediction. It was here a symbol of the bestowal on them of the blessings for which the patriarch prayed.

According to Exodus xxix. 10, 15, 19, Aaron and his sons laid their hands on certain animals for sacrifice, as a symbolical transfer to the animals of their own liability to punishment. Their liability to punishment, or being held guilty, as sinners, was thus symbolically conveyed to the animals, so that Aaron and his sons might be regarded as guiltless, and suitable for the priesthood.

In Numbers xxvii. 18–23, we read of Moses's laying his hands on Joshua, in the presence of the congregation, at his designation to office as an associate with himself. The same idea here prevails. It ap-

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pears, from Deut. xxxiv. 9, that this act was regarded as connected with the divine bestowal on Joshua of the spirit of wisdom, in all probability as a sure token of its bestowal, as well as of putting on him, Num. xxvii. 20, some of Moses' honor.

In the New Testament, numerous instances occur in which hands were laid on the sick, as an emblem, it would seem, of the bestowal of health.

Our Lord's putting his hands on children, Mark x. 16, was, in like manner, symbolical of the bestowal of blessings.

According to Acts vi. 6, the imposition of hands on the Seven at their designation was performed with special prayer. Bestowal of divine influences, in answer to prayer, on the men selected, seems here indicated. Though the men were previously "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," verse 3, yet it would be in perfect accordance with divine operations, and the nature of the gospel, that this designation should be followed by a marked increase of spiritual influences, and of religious strength and enjoyment.

In Acts viii. 17, 18 the laying on of hands by the apostles Peter and John, and in xix. 6 by the apostle Paul, was performed in connection with the bestow-

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ing, through them, on the persons concerned, of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts xiii. 3 we learn, that this act was performed at the setting apart of Paul and Barnabas for their first missionary tour. They did not at that time *enter* on their service, as ministers of the gospel; but they were then called to a very special work: and at their separation, or designation to it, this impressive emblem of the communication from God, of qualifications and blessings, was an appropriate accompaniment of the special prayers for the successful prosecution of their work.

Now, this general idea is eminently applicable to the occasion of a person's being introduced into the ministry, and may usefully be set forth by this impressive act, conjoined with special prayer to God, as the giver of requisite qualifications and blessings. The act does not mean, in the present day, all that it meant when performed by an apostle, but an important part of it; and it now, probably, means all that it meant when, even in apostolic times, it was performed by ordinary elders.

It is, then, properly retained as a simple, yet signifi-

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cant and impressive act, harmonious with the character of Christianity.

§ *Imposition of hands not essential to an ordination.* — Yet it is not essential to an ordination, or to a person's being acknowledged as a minister. It is a usage, descended to us, doubtless, from apostolic times, but not restricted, in those early times, to *entrance* on the ministry, nor founded either on divine prescription, or on the nature of things. The essence of an ordination consists in a church's calling to the work of the ministry one of its members, who possesses, substantially, the requisite qualifications. Should circumstances, anywhere, evidently admit of only so very simple a proceeding as this, the entrance of the person concerned on the ministry ought to be regarded as sufficiently harmonious with the principles of the New Testament. Should a church, or a candidate for the ministry, choose, particularly on conscientious grounds, to omit this ceremony, its omission, as it could not impair the efficacy of special prayer on the occasion, so ought not to be regarded as, in any degree, unfavorably affecting the ministerial position of the individual.

Still, in ordinary circumstances it is well to pay

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regard to such customs of churches as do not conflict with any Christian duty, are free from superstitious tendencies, and from their suitableness in point of meaning, have ever been acknowledged as worthy of observance.

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APPENDIX.

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APPENDIX.

I. Pages 18–23 of Ch. I., Part I.

ON THE PRACTICAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN CHURCHES AND OTHER BODIES.

According to the scriptural idea, a church of Christ is not to be regarded in the light of a civil, or political, body. Churches pertain to a cause which is not of this world. They cannot, according to scriptural principles, confer civil rights and privileges, nor inflict civil disabilities: so that, if those principles are properly regarded, a man neither gains nor loses any civil right either by becoming a member of a Christian church, or by declining, or by ceasing, to be a member. The great principle, "My kingdom is not of this world," John xviii. 36, is a pervading one in the religion of Christ.

Again: a church is evidently distinct from all ecclesiastical, and other organizations which have not been divinely prescribed, but which men's view of neces-

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sity, or expediency, has originated: such as associations of churches, conventions, missionary boards, and other bodies for promoting objects of Christian benevolence. These give scope to the united action of Christians, and to the joint action of Christians and of other men, not in a church-capacity, but in the capacity of an association for certain specified objects which may, or may not, be included among the matters belonging to a church *as such*. Into some of these associations, men enter, not because they are church-members, not because they are Christians, for others also are admitted; but because, from a variety of considerations, they wish to accomplish certain good objects. A man may enter, or may decline to enter, into them and yet retain his position in a church and perform all the duties of his church-relation. He may approve or disapprove of them, and yet be a good and worthy member of a church.

Besides: such bodies differ materially from churches in that the objects which they design directly to promote may be either secular or spiritual; and these may be sought by certain specified modes of action which human wisdom, rather than divine authority, has originated. Persons belonging to these associa-

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tions are, in their associate capacity, properly regarded, not as church-members, but as men impelled by religious and benevolent considerations to seek the welfare of their fellowmen and the honor of God. Members of one and the same church may differ in their opinions about the principles involved in these organizations and about the modes of conduct adopted, without impairing, in the least, the relation which they naturally sustain as members of a church. In everything pertaining properly and strictly to the church they may be agreed; in things pertaining to other bodies they may so far differ that they cannot associate in them.

A difference will appear, also, by considering that some of these bodies, a reform society, for instance, can regard only the externals of a vicious practice, or system; if these are abandoned or abolished, the object of such a society is gained, whatever principles, or feelings, the reformed persons may still cherish. In other words, such a society has not for its specific object the right state of a man's *heart*. A church, however, is designed to influence character in the sight of God; in other words, to influence the heart, to cultivate true righteousness of soul which

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shall secure right feelings and purposes, and tend to accomplish needed outward changes. Thus the great end to be aimed at by a church, namely spiritual and eternal salvation from sin, is not the purpose of a reform-society; since, though the reform may be effected, the men who are reformed may still be destitute of genuine righteousness towards God and man.

The distinction between a church of Christ and any association of human origin would, if rightly apprehended, enable members of churches to avoid collision respecting subjects which, involving moral wrong, confessedly demand the reformatory influence of Christianity. While Christianity, as a system of righteousness, is designed and adapted to rectify all social wrongs, there may, notwithstanding, be great dirversity of opinion among members of the same church, if not as to the subjects themselves, yet as to modes of action in regard to them; so that they cannot, in their church-capacity, act harmoniously with reference to those subjects. They may, however, as men, as benevolent and Christian men, exert, and ought in every suitable way to exert, a salutary influence in regard to social wrongs, both individually and in combination with others.

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II. Page 3, last paragraph, Ch. II., Part I.

THE JEWISH SYNAGOGUES, AS INFLUENCING THE FORM OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

Neander, in his Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles, Book I. Chap. II. p. 32, Ryland's translation, says: "A model. . . . already existed among the Jews, along with the Temple worship, namely, the Synagogues. . . . But it may be disputed whether the apostles, to whom Christ committed the chief direction of affairs, designed from the first that believers should form a society exactly on the model of the Synagogue and, in pursuance of this plan, instituted particular offices for the government of the church corresponding to that model — or, whether, without such a preconceived plan, distinct offices were appointed as circumstances required: in doing which, they would avail themselves of the model of the synagogue with which they were familiar."

Neander's latter suggestion is the preferable one.

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The synagogues were not, properly *the model* for the apostles; but when an office became necessary, the usages of the synagogues might, of course, exert an imperceptible influence; and after a requisite office came into being, if it corresponded in the main to one in a synagogue the accustomed term for such office would naturally be employed. The idea of the synagogue as a model is, then, of very limited use.

It would, also, be an objection to this idea, if, as is stated by Vitringa, in Synag. Vet. Lib. 2. c. 11 and 3. pr. I. c. g, and by John in his Biblical Archaeology, § 372, there were in synagogues, besides a body of elders, a chief of the synagogue, a sort of presiding elder, to whom the elders stood very much in the relation of advisers and helpers. Of such an office in a church, no mention occurs in the New Testament.

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III. Page 9, Ch. II., Part I.

EXAMINATION OF I TIM. 3: 11. ON THE QUESTION OF DEACONESSES.

Our version of this passage, "Even so must their wives be grave," &c., makes it refer to the wives of deacons. This is a questionable rendering. The absence, in the original, of the word for *their* is unfavorable to it; and if the passage relate to the wives of deacons, the place which it occupies is unnatural. Besides, why should particular directions be given as to the wives of deacons, and none as to the wives of bishops? If, however, this verse indicate the qualifications of deaconesses, its occurrence is natural: and this mention of deaconesses and the character requisite for them having been made, and that in a somewhat parenthetic way, the apostle resumes his instructions concerning deacons, and the attention of the reader is recalled to them by the repetition of their title. The similarity of qualifications for the women to those of the men, with but a slight differenee, is also favorable

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to the opinion that deaconesses were here meant. If the verse be translated just as it stands in the original, its reference to them will be sufficiently clear: thus, "In like manner, also, must the women be grave," &c.; that is, the women who hold a relation similar to that held by the men just mentioned.

De Wette, and Wiesinger in his continuation of Olshausen so understand this verse. De Wette produces Chrysostom, Theodoret, Theophylact, Oscolampadius, Pelagius, Grotius, Mosheim, Michaelis, as referring the passage to deaconesses; Luther, Beza, Bengel, Rosenmuller, Heinrichs, Heydenreich, Wegscheider, Matthaie, to the wives of deacons; and Calvin, Estius, Calovius, Macknight, to the wives of bishops and deacons.

The church historians speak, without hesitation, of deaconesses in the first Gentile churches.

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IV. Pages 5–10, Ch. II., Part I.

ON THE ORIGIN AND SETTLEMENT OF OFFICERS IN CHURCHES DURING THE APOSTOLIC AGE, AS REPRESENTED BY VARIOUS WRITERS.

The Christian assembly, or church in Jerusalem had at first, so far as appears, no officers besides the apostles. They stood, as it were, naturally at the head of affairs. Religious exercises on occasions of worship did not require an official arrangement, being probably the spontaneous expression by the apostles and others, who possessed the requisite gifts, of their views and feelings; they spoke and prayed according as they felt the impulse so to do. The apostles, for a time, found it not too burdensome to have charge of various matters relating to the care of the members; and whatever was needed as to accommodations for worship and any special services would be readily performed by suitable persons. The burial of Ananias and Sapphira illustrates this: "the young men arose, wound them up and buried them," Acts v. 6, 10. We need not suppose that the young men did this officially.

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At length, however, the care of the necessitous widows became an occasion of embarrassment; and the apostles directed the election of seven men expressly for this business, Acts vi. 1–4. This is the first intimation of any officers being appointed. It may be interesting here to notice briefly some of the methods which have been devised for explaining the origin and final settlement of officers in the churches.

1. The view of Mosheim, in his Institutes of Ecclesiastical History, Vol. I., pp. 67–70, Murdock's translation is, that the Christian body had its elders from the first and its deacons, or those who rendered service other than that of teaching and prayer. Among these deacons were the young men who buried Ananias and Sapphira. But as this company of deacons managed the alms-distribution in an unsatisfactory way, the apostles advised the election of an additional company of seven to prevent occasions of jealousy.

2. Neander's theory is, that very early in the existence of the church in Jerusalem a number of elders were chosen for the general regulation of its affairs. They were not by their *office* teachers, — History of the Christian Religion and Church, Vol. I., p. 186 — though they might, like others, have the gift of teach-

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ing or preaching. In addition to those, agreeably to the sixth chapter of Acts, another company of officers was chosen, the deacons, p. 188.*

A special office for teaching, or preaching, was not at first required, p. 186, since freeness of communication in teaching and exhortation was encouraged by the abundant influence of the Spirit, and some possessed, as their spiritual endowment, the gift of teaching. The qualifications for teaching may have been possessed by some elders, as well as by other members of the church; so that the same man was sometimes both an elder and a teacher, though not a teacher by virtue of being an elder. These two kinds of service were frequently performed by the same man; and thus there was a tendency to combine in the same person the twofold service of elder and teacher. Accordingly towards the end of the apostolic period, "aptness to teach" — 1 Tim. iii. 2 — came to be included among the qualifications of an elder, otherwise called *bishop;*

* In Neander's Church History, an account is first given of the office of elders, p. 184, and subsequently of that of deacons, p. 188. In his Planting and Training, the office of deacon is first treated of, pp. 33, 34; and subsequently that of elders, p. 35.

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and a bishop was required, Titus. i. 9, to maintain the pure Christian doctrine and defend it against opposers.

3. Gieseler's theory, in his Compendium of Ecclesiastical History, Vol. I., p. 74, Davidson's translation, is, that the first company of disciples in Jerusalem became gradually formed into a regular society of which the apostles were the head. The first official appointment was that of the Seven as distributors of alms, out of which appointment eventually arose the deacons. Soon after this, elders were chosen for managing the joint concerns of the church, not specially for teaching.

4. Another view considers the election of the Seven related in the sixth of Acts, as a germ from which grew the twofold official arrangement of bishop and deacon.

Here it must first be observed that, in the New Testament, no official name is given to these men; probably, at the time of their election a name was not assigned to them, since they were the only officers and the design of their election was specifically stated. Subsequently, however, a name might have been found convenient; and as in the Jewish synagogues, to whose usages the first Christians had been habituated,

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the term *elders* was employed for designating those who had the principal management of affairs, it would be natural that this term should be applied to the office-bearers in the Christian assembly.

Again: some of the men first chosen to office in Jerusalem had the requisite endowments, also, for teachers and leaders of worship; as appears by the instances of Stephen and Philip. Others of this company were not probably, thus endowed; their ability consisted mostly in their adaptation to the more specific duties of their appointment. A distribution of services would seem to be thus provided for, and a foundation to exist for, at least, two classes of officers.

So in churches beyond Palestine, in which — agreeably to Acts xiv. 23 — elders were appointed. If the distinction between a bishop and a deacon were not established when those churches were formed, yet the diverse qualifications of the men who bore the general designation of *elders* would lay the foundation for a permanent distinction of officers.

The arrangement which had become established at the close of the Apostle Paul's career, namely, that of the two official departments of bishop and deacon, may have thus gradually come into existence. The

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word *elder*, used at first probably in a general sense, was occasionally still so used after the distinction of offices had arisen; as perhaps in 1 Tim. v. 17, "Let the elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honor; especially they which labor in the word and doctrine." Some of the elders, it would seem from this, had a sphere of service different from preaching. Were not these the deacons, and those who labored in the word and doctrine the pastors, or bishops? But while the word *elder* might still, occasionally, be applied to both classes of officers, the word *bishop* does not seem to have been thus used, but to have had a more specific signification.

The arrangement of offices in the church would seem, then, to have been brought about in a very familiar way without extensive human foresight. The Spirit and providence of God directed to a beginning for the purpose of meeting a present exigency; this beginning proved a germ. If in this way offices sprung up and were definitely arranged, we cannot but admire the method, and observe its harmony with other divine arrangements, both as to simplicity and to multifold adaptations.

Since, however, we have not a sufficient number of

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historical facts to warrant a confident judgment as to the origin of offices or their development, and since there is room for various modes of explanation, and since the subject is at best rather a matter of curiosity than of inherent importance, we need not be solicitous to construct a theory respecting it. Let it suffice, if we may ascertain, as a matter of fact, what were the offices which became established under apostolic guidance.

V. Page 9, Ch. III., Part I.

WHETHER THERE WAS AN ARISTOCRATIC ELEMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE EARLIEST CHURCHES.

Neander, in his HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, Vol. I., p. 184, expresses the opinion that the council of presbyters [elders] was a body to which "the guidance of the communities [churches] was everywhere entrusted," and that this council was an aristocratic element originally existing in the church-constitution.

This opinion is a questionable one. Though this distinguished author distinctly makes account of the

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action of churches themselves, at least the coöperation of churches with their elders, or the participation of an entire church in matters of common concern, pp. 189, 190, yet he gives, p. 184, too much prominence to this "guiding senate." The facts do not warrant the ascribing of so much power to the elders: not to say, that there is no evidence of an eldership existing till some time after church-action had commenced.

So far from the churches being originally under a "guiding senate," the transfer of church-business to the body of elders was a departure from the original method, and may justly be regarded as the introduction of an unscriptural aristocracy, and the real commencement of clerical domination. The utmost extent to which an apparently aristocratic element shows itself in the New Testament is in the apostles' giving direction to matters on which churches were to act. But such an aristocratic element as Neander supposes, would have been the germ of a hierarchy, since it would easily and without a very lengthened process, bring church-business wholly, in fact, if not in name, into the hands of the officers, to the virtual annihilation of *church*-action: and if the church-constitution did originally contain this element, hierarchical establishments

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have a strong defence. But in view of the effects which have resulted from the transfer of church-business to a select official body, we cannot but learn that the real safety of churches consists in their conducting their own business and government; the officers regarding themselves in such matters as associates with the church-members and occupying the position, "not of masters, but of ministers." When those whose proper position is that of ministers assume to be, or are made to be, masters, it is not wonderful that Christian simplicity gives way to ambition, and Christian purity to corruption.

VI. Page 9, Ch. III., Part I.

EXAMINATION OF ACTS XIV. 23, "WHEN THEY HAD ORDAINED THEM ELDERS," &C.

The view is very questionable which has frequently been given of this passage, that the word itself here translated *ordained* shows by its etymology that the members of the churches made the election. Such was Bezas' opinion; since he thus renders the pas-

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sage, " Quumque ipsi *per suffragia creassent* presbyteros." See Dr. Campbell's comment on this rendering in his Preliminary Dissertations, X. Part V. § 7.

Etymologically, the original word signifies *to stretch out the hand*, as in voting. But words often acquire a meaning secondary to that which etymology would impose; and in the present instance the primary meaning probably gave place to the signification *appoint*, without retaining a reference to the mode of appointing, just as in Acts x. 41, this word substantially expresses a choice, or appointment, made not by man but God. Besides, as the word here expresses an act of Paul and Barnabas, we have, if the etymological idea must be retained, the cumbrous representation by one word that they *appointed* the elders *by the voting of the churches*. The people might have participated in the appointment; but this circumstance is not conveyed by the term itself.

Compare, for the etymological interpretation, Coleman's Primitive Church, pp. 60–65. For a correct philological view, see Dr. Hackett's Notes on the Acts.

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VII. Pages 11–12, Ch. III., Part I.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT, AS COMPARED WITH FORMS OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

The government of a Christian church has evidently more resemblance to democracy than to any other political form. An important difference, however, is to be noticed; namely, a church has a sovereign Head, whose will it is bound to execute, and who has disclosed the principles on which its action is to proceed. It is not a self-constituted and, in every respect, self-governing community, but a community which is to be guided by a fair interpretation of its Sovereign's will, as made known in the New Testament. It is not a legislative body, but executive. Its human executive officers, like itself executive, not legislative, are to carry out its decisions made under the laws of Christ; and a church is at liberty to form only such decisions as, in its judgment, accord with the revealed will of its Sovereign.

The fact that a church is not a legislative b

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a deliberative and executive one, for ascertaining and carrying into effect the laws, or will, of Christ, is so distinctive a feature, that a comparison with any form of human government is somewhat perplexing and not serviceable. We cannot denominate its government republican; because with a republic we associate the thought of a select representative body for legislation. If we name it democratic, we must yet remove from our conception of it the liability of subjection to the will and caprice of a multitude, because its principles are fixed by supreme authority. If we say it is not a monarchy, we must not forget that it has an invisible Monarch. If we deny that it is an oligarchy, or aristocracy, we must still remember, that to decide what are the laws of Christ, how they are to be applied, or executed, may, at times, require the cultivated intellect, the wisdom and the practical skill which, in almost any company of human beings, will distinguish a few from others, and qualify them to guide others to right opinions and action.

In preference to any political term, the word *congregational* has advantages, as not only indicating the ·e of action, but also as agreeing with the just ·ty of ecclesiastical affairs, as divesting them of

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that governmental array which human abuse has thrown around a divine institution, and as being appropriate to the numerous small collections of Christians to which the New Testament entrusts the affairs of Christ's kingdom.

VIII. Pages 11, 12, Ch, III., Part I.

WHETHER THE ORIGINAL MODE OF CHURCH-ACTION IS TO BE RETAINED.

When we have ascertained from the Scriptures the original mode of church-action, the inquiry may arise, whether that mode ought to be everywhere, and always, retained.

An affirmative reply to this inquiry rests, first, on the weight of apostolic example in its favor; and, next, on its remarkable adaptation to human nature.

This adaptation appears in the following particulars:

1. It is suited to all ages of the world and all countries, whatever be the form of the civil government.

2. It is suited to an incipient state and to the most advanced state of Christian culture. It does not wear

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out, nor ever become unsuited to the real purposes of Christianity.

3. It is salutary both to clergy and to laity, with reference both to doctrine and to Christian activity. It is less liable to abuse than modes of human origin; and when abuses arise in connection with it, they can more readily be corrected.

4. It is adapted to promote intellectual and moral elevation among Christians and, consequently, in mankind. Christianity was designed to advance our nature to its manhood, and requires, in order to be properly apprehended and applied, the maturity of spiritual manhood which itself only can produce. Its mode of church-action is in harmony with this design of advancing Christians to maturity and of still cherishing that maturity.

5. It is more pliable and better adapted to exigencies than any system of church-action which is fixed by human rules; while yet its just pliability does not involve a surrender of the vital principles of Christianity.

6. It tends, likewise, to reform society by keeping in play the activity of churches and of Christians individually for right objects and in a right direction; and

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just so far as this tendency is interfered with by any human modes of church-action, so far the leavening power of Christianity is impaired, and Christianity, instead of thoroughly affecting the world, is itself injuriously affected by the world; the world penetrates it instead of its penetrating the world.

IX. Pages 2–12, Ch. III., Part I.

VIEWS OF CHURCH HISTORIANS RESPECTING THE EARLIEST CHURCHES.

Among church-historians of learning and impartiality a general agreement exists, in reference both to the organization and to the action of the churches formed in apostolic times. The opinions of Neander have, in the course of this chapter, been casually introduced. An additional specimen of the testimony of ecclesiastical historians may here be in place.

Mosheim in his Commentaries on the State of Christianity during the first three hundred and twenty-five years from the Christian Era, Vol. 1. p. 146, Murdock's ed. says: "The power · · · of appointing teachers and ministers · · · · was lodged in the

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people at large; nor did the apostles, although invested with divine authority, either resolve on or sanction anything whatever without the knowledge and concurrence of the general body of Christians of which the church was composed."

P. 171. "When a number of Christians, therefore, were collected together sufficient to form a church, certain men of gravity and approved faith were without delay appointed, either by the apostles themselves, or their companions, with the assent of the multitude, to preside over it, under the title of presbyters [elders] or bishops."

P. 179. "Every church was composed of three constituent parts: 1st, Teachers, who were also invested with the government of the community, according to the laws; 2dly, Ministers of each sex [deacons and deaconesses]; and 3rdly, The multitude, or people. Of these parts, the chief in point of authority was the people; for to them belonged the appointment of the bishop and presbyters, as well as of the inferior ministers: with them resided the power of enacting laws, as also of adopting or rejecting whatever might be proposed in the general assemblies, and of expelling and again receiving into communion any

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depraved or unworthy members. In short, nothing whatever of any moment could be determined, or carried into effect, without their knowledge and concurrence."

P. 196. "Although all the churches were, in this first age of Christianity, united together in one common bond of faith and love, and were in every respect ready to promote the interests and welfare of each other by a reciprocal interchange of good offices; yet with regard to government and internal economy, every individual church considered itself as an independent community, none of them ever looking in these respects, beyond the circle of its own members for assistance, or recognizing any sort of external influence or authority. Neither in the New Testament, nor in auy ancient document whatever, do we find any thing recorded, from whence it might be inferred that any of the minor churches were at all dependent on, or looked for direction to, those of greater magnitude or consequence; on the contrary, several things occur therein which put it out of all doubt that every one of them enjoyed the same rights and was considered as being on a footing of the most perfect equality with the rest. Indeed, it cannot — I will not say, be

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proved, — but even made appear probable from any testimony, divine or human, that in this age it was the practice for several churches to enter into, and maintain among themselves, that sort of association which afterwards came to subsist amongst the churches of almost every province; I allude to their assembling by their bishops, at stated periods, for the purpose of enacting general laws and determining any questions or controversies that might arise respecting divine matters."

X. Page 4, Ch. IV., Part I.

ON THE SIMPLICITY OF REQUISITES, ORIGINALLY, FOR CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP.

It may be profitable to contemplate the simplicity of requisites for church-membership, agreeably to the view presented on pp. 3, 4, as almost necessarily leaving room for a wide range of religious speculation among the early converts and leading to diversity of opinion on various topics. This circumstance, however, accordant with the genius of Christianity, was doubtless abused: and the abuse led to those unhappy

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disagreements of religious opinion which arose in some quarters, even during the apostles' times, and which subsequently increased.

In reference to this state of things, we must consider how wide spread was the tenet that Jesus was the Messiah, and what myriads, according to Acts xxi. 20, in the original, of Jews had embraced it, as well as many from among the Gentiles; and yet, how small was the number of well qualified teachers of Christianity, to detect the latent seeds of error, and to fill the minds of the professed converts with pure Christian doctrine. We must, also, consider the almost irresistible tendencies among the converted Jews, to perpetuate what was distinctively Jewish and had really been displaced; also, the probability that some besides Simon the sorcerer, Acts viii. &c., made a hollow profession, and that others, both Jews and Gentiles, though holding to the Messiahship of Jesus, would, through some lingering philosophical prejudices, combine with Christianity various dogmas foreign to its simplicity, or modify the new doctrines so as, at least, to reconcile them with various favorite articles of belief. We must consider, again, how active such men would be in the absence of apostles,

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or other qualified expounders of the Christian system, and in the absence of an authoritative written standard of the Christian faith, such as we possess in the New Testament. It is, surely, not surprising that Judaizing Christians arose and that multitudes were made a spoil of "through philosophy and vain deceit."

This abuse, however, as is above intimated, is one of the unavoidable accompaniments of a religion which so directly and strongly addresses the intellect, as well as the heart; and which comes in contact with the human intellect in all stages of its development, and in all diversities of circumstances, whether favorable, or unfavorable, to its healthful action.

In addition to corruptions of doctrine, the simplicity of requisites for church-membership, in connection with the deeply immoral state of society in those times, will aid in accounting for the failure of so many among the early professed Christians to exemplify the morality of the gospel. Though they admitted its central truth, they could not sufficiently apprehend, nor appreciate, its elevated morality, and hence fell a prey to temptation. It is not surprising, then, that while the apostolic age signally exemplified in numerous instances the sanctifying and elevating power of

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the gospel, it was also encumbered with defective and hollow-hearted profession; and that in the primitive churches, as appears from the Epistles directed to them, were members who needed cautions in regard to the simplest requisitions of morality.

XI. Page 3, Ch. V., Part I.

ON THE EARLY DEPARTURE FROM CHURCH-INDEPENDENCE.

The independence which evidently marked the earliest churches, is so different from the relative position in which, history teaches us, churches stood soon after the apostolic age, that a few thoughts on this topic may be not out of place.

The sentiment of fraternity and equality, so congenial with Christianity and so naturally flowing from the spirit which our Lord inculcated on his disciples, very soon gave way to that of superiority and subordination. Churches in cities came to be regarded, by congregations which had sprung up through their agency in the surrounding country, with a feeling of

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dependence. The church in a city was a mother; the congregations in the rural districts around were daughters, and that not merely in affection, but also as to dependence. This connection was perfectly natural and consistent up to a certain point. But at length, the civil distinctions in the Roman empire came to have the influence of models, whether consciously or unconsciously to Christian leaders, for the relation of churches to one another. As the metropolis of a province was the seat of civil authority over all the minor cities and towns in the province, so the church in the metropolis was regarded as a sort of central point from which ecclesiastical influence emanated throughout the province.

This governmental idea was still further extended; so that, in harmony with the civil arrangement by which the large capitals, Rome, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth and Alexandria were each empowered with a species of jurisdiction over the corresponding divisions of the empire, these five principal cities were so many central points of ecclesiastical authority for the same divisions; and, as a natural result of this commingling of ecclesiastical and civil ideas, the chief city, Rome,

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became in due time the chief seat of ecclesiastial power, and, at length, the papacy was established.*

Now all this arose from overlooking the fraternal character of Christianity, and from applying to a kingdom, which is not of this world, the maxims and policy of a worldly domination. And the results, which have come from engrafting on Christianity a germ taken from civil government, should effectually caution the people of Christ against the opinion, that the organization and government of churches may safely be conformed to existing civil arrangements in any country where Christianity obtains footing. Up to a certain point, dependence in a Christian congregation or a neighboring larger one is proper and safe; but that point having been reached, namely, ability to sustain itself and conduct its own affairs, the principle of fraternity and equality should have play; the period of childhood and youth being passed, the responsibilities and rights of manhood should at once succeed, for the child has become a man.

It is, obviously, the Creator's will that when a family, small and perhaps weak, is set off from a numerous

* Neander's History of the Christian Religion and Church, Vol. I., pp. 202–204.

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household, though it ought to cherish respect for the original family and may for awhile be dependent on it, yet it should be, or become, a separate family, and conduct its own concerns. The case is the same in regard to colonies and provinces of nations. Dependence is safe and salutary, till the inherent power of the smaller community becomes adequate to self-government; beyond that point, dependence is cramping to the inferior, and lordship tends to produce, in the superior, arrogance and tryanny.

Just so in church affairs. In accordance with specimens in the New Testament, Christianity requires for its harmonious and efficient development, that the principle of fraternal equality should pervade its movements; and that at numerous spots, here and there, all over the world, separate centres of enlightening and sanctifying influence should be established, from which that influence shall penetrate the surrounding darkness and sinfulness, according to its own inherent energies and in freedom from all extraneous control which might impair its energies.

It is instructive to observe how directly this spirit of superiority and subordination came into conflict with a class of churches, in rural districts, that had

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originated and had become centres of Christian activity before civil arrangements had been applied to church-affairs. The bishops of these old churches in rural districts refused to surrender their independence, and to act in harmony with the new system of subordination to city churches. Collisions arose, consequently, between them and those bishops whose rank and power were regulated by conformity to the civil arrangements; and, gradually, the bishops of those ancient country churches were more and more restricted in their action by the overwhelming influence of the new order of things, and eventually such churches and bishops disappear from history.*

* Neander's Church History, Vol. I., p. 202: Vol. II., pp. 159, 160.

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XII. Page 7, Ch. V., Part I.

THEORY OF DENOMINATIONAL DIVERSITY.

The view presented in the paragraphs here referred to suggests the true theory of denominational diversity among professed Christians. Diversity as to the vital elements of Christianity, or as to church-organization, particularly as connected with the ordinances, produces diversity of sects; the several members, or churches, of each sect being far more intimately connected with one another, than with churches of other sects. At the same time, between these several sects, as between Christians viewed individually, notwithstanding their differences of judgment, there will be various points of agreement: and therefore, as to the duties involved in the mutual relation of churches, and as to the conduct of different sects, or denominations toward one another, the apostolic injunction in Phil. iii. 15, 16 should be acted on: "Whereunto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us

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mind the same thing." But wherein any differ, it would be absurd to expect them to walk by the same rule.

XIII. Page 10, Ch. V., Part I.

PRACTICAL HINTS IN REGARD TO ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCILS.

1. The membership of a council should be restricted to the very persons whom the churches have appointed. Responsibility has been laid on *them* in particular. The members of a council, then, are not at liberty to introduce into their number, as *acting* members, any other persons. They may seek wisdom from any quarter; and may consequently invite any suitable persons to deliberate with them.

2. The subject to be presented should be invariably made known to the churches from which a deputation is requested.

3. As a measure of prudence, if not of right, every church which is requested to send delegates to a council should be informed to what other churches the request has been sent.

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4. The deliberations of a council should be confined to the subject, or subjects, referred to it. It is not at liberty, in the capacity of a council, to deliberate and advise on other subjects.

5. Resort should be had to councils for the settlement of difficulties as seldom as possible. This method of seeking a settlement is liable to perpetuate and aggravate the difficulties, and to interfere with the self-reliance of churches. A church, formed agreeably to the New Testament, and cherishing the right spirit, is ordinarily quite competent to its own guidance.

XIV. Pages 1–4, Ch. I., Part II.

ON NEANDER'S VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

It is not, perhaps, surprising that Neander (Church History, Vol. 1. pp. 193–199) should regard the Christian ministry as merely a providential growth of circumstances, and as not being an original, or apostolic, arrangement. He thinks that the separation of men from secular pursuits to the special service of preaching, and other ministerial duties, arose after the apos-

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tolic age, when, through the enlargement of churches, and the consequent increase of care and labor for their benefit, those who were teachers, or preachers, could not find time for procuring their own livelihood by secular pursuits; and particularly, when the idea of the special sanctity of the Jewish priesthood, as separate from the common people, as not allowed to participate in secular enployments, and as the appointed medium of spiritual blessings, had become transferred to those who occupied the position of teachers among the Christians. This idea, mainly, he thinks, originated *the clergy* among Christians, as a distinct order.

That the office of the Christian ministry, requiring the separation of certain men to its duties, existed substantially in the apostolic age, seems to be in harmony with the New Testament. In consequence, also, of the spiritual and absorbing nature of its duties, it has, evidently, an eminence in the New Testament above the other church-office. And though, for a considerable period, the men occupied in it may not have received their support from churches, on account of existing circumstances, yet the *tendency* was to that result; and whenever and wherever circumstances made it necessary, the divine requirement, stated in

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I. Cor. ix. 14, took effect. This view helps, also, perhaps, more than the other, to account for the abuse of regarding those who served in the ministry as a priestly caste; since, according to it, there was an actual basis on which such an abuse might rest.

The course which Neander's mind took, on this subject, may have originated in the fact, that all the ecclesiastical arrangements to which he had been accustomed gave a priestly air to the ministry, sundering Christian ministers from the people, as a sort of mediating class, having some peculiar official holiness, and being peculiarly a channel of spiritual influences to the people. The unscripturalness of this view and its utter lack of conformity to the genius of Christianity, he clearly perceived; but he seems to have gone to an extreme in the opposite direction, not tracing the ministry, as a separate sphere of Christian service, to a divine sanction. If we take the medium course, and regard ministers of the gospel as public teachers of the Christian religion, not as a peculiarly holy caste, not as a divinely appointed and necessary channel for spiritual influences to the people, and not favored, officially, with more intimate access to God than the people themselves, yet as

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having special responsibilities and occupying a divinely appointed station, we avoid both extremes. In Christianity, all believers are priests to God, offering him service and allowed intimate access to him. Still, this community of priests, that is, the entire Christian body, needs official arrangements in order that the priestly character and blessings may be secured and enjoyed.

XV. Page 10, Ch. II., Part II.

WOMEN ENDOWED WITH THE PROPHETIC GIFT. — WOMEN, IN REFERENCE TO ADDRESSING PROMISCUOUS RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLIES.

The prophetic gift was possessed by women as well as men. The daughters of Philip the evangelist, Acts xxi. 8, 9, were endowed with it. Other women, in the earliest times of the gospel, would seem to have possessed it, since the prediction, quoted by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, contains the declaration, Acts ii. 17, "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." This is also implied in 1 Cor. xi. 5, "every woman that prayeth or prophesieth."

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In regard to the sphere of activity for Christian women ordinarily, all the instructions of the apostle Paul presuppose that only men are to serve in *the ministry*, 1 Tim. iii. 1–6, Tit. i. 6–9; and in 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12, he expressly forbids women to take the position of public *teachers* of religion. In conformity to this general statement are the instructions of the apostle in 1 Tim. ii. 8–12, in which he draws a distinction between the believing men and the believing women as to their respective spheres of action: "I will that *the men* (the word in the original is expressive of sex, and is here used in contrast with the word *women*, in the 9th verse) pray everywhere (that is, in every place of assembling), lifting up holy hands," &c: "In like manner that *women* adorn themselves in modest apparel. . . . with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach," &c.

The apostle thus expressly forbids women to become *public teachers* of religion. So in 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35, he enjoins silence on women in public (compare verses 23, 24), religious assemblies: "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto

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them to speak. . . . for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

There is another passage which, apparently, allowed an exception to the rule which the apostle had laid down. In 1 Cor. xi. 5, he says, "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoreth her head." It seems that some of the women in the church of Corinth prayed and prophesied (that is, made religious addresses), and perhaps uttered predictions in public with their heads uncovered; a practice which the apostle condemned as unseemly and contrary to the dictates of nature. He therefore insisted that a woman praying or prophesying should, when so doing, wear a head-covering. The most satisfactory explanation of this passage is, that it refers to those women who really possessed the prophetic gift and whom as being impelled by the Holy Spirit he would only instruct as to the manner in which they should exercise their gift, inasmuch as "the spirit of the prophets were subject to the prophets." 1 Cor. xiv. 32. In all other cases he would apply without any restriction, the demands of propriety. Whether propriety admits of a woman's praying, or exhorting, in public, while she does not encroach on

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the province of *teaching*, would be variously decided, according to the circumstances and usages of various localities.

But the general rule in relation to women's addressing public religious assemblies is clear. This rule is, of course, not in the least unfavorable to the assembling of devout women, by themselves, for social prayer and other modes of mutual religious benefit, or to their expressing their religious experiences in private meetings of the church, or to their privately ministering to the doctrinal improvement of even their Christian brethren, after the example of Priscilla who with her husband Aquila, expounded unto Apollos, in their house, the way of God more perfectly. Acts xviii. 26.

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XVI. Pages 1-3 Ch. III., II.

TESTIMONIALS TO THE ORIGINAL IDENTITY OF PRESBYTERS AND BISHOPS.

The testimony of early writers to the original identity of presbyters and bishops is clear and explicit.

Clement of Rome, believed by many to be the same as is mentioned by the apostle in Phil. iv. 3, and whose extant writings date as far back as about the end of the first century, makes no mention of an order of men intermediate between the bishop and the deacons. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 42, he expresses himself in precise harmony with the New Testament, naming only bishops and deacons.

Polycarp, the third Christian writer after Clement, resembles him in this matter; only he uses the word *presbyter*, or elder, in place of, and equivalent to, the word *bishop*. See his epistle to the Philippians, chapters v. and vi.

Intermediate between Clement and Polycarp is Ignatius. Epistles ascribed to him make very frequent

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mention of the three classes, bishops, presbyters, and deacons, and indicate a marked superiority of the bishop over the other orders. This singular fact of his diversity from the writer preceding him, and the writer succeeding, is explained by the discovery, which is acquiesced in by the learned, that the epistles which have long been ascribed to Ignatius are, either wholesale forgeries, or have been grossly interpolated.

A few quotations from Gieseler's Ecclesiastical History, and extracts from the Christian Fathers to whom he refers, are here added. In Vol. I. pp. 90 and 91, Davidson's translation, he produces the declaration of Jerome (†420), who says, in Epistle 82 [83] ad Oceanum, "Among the ancients, bishops and presbyters were the same." In his commentary on Titus i. 7, Jerome also says, "A presbyter is the same as a bishop," and proceeds to remark that, after schisms arose in the church, it became the universal practice to elevate one above the other presbyters, and devolve on him a greater responsibility, so as to prevent schisms. "As therefore," he remarks, "the presbyters know that they are subject *by the custom of the church* to him who has been set over them, so bishops should know that they are superior to presbyters more

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by *custom* than by divine appointment, and that they ought to govern the church in common," that is, the bishops in common with the presbyters.

Chrysostom (†407), on Phil. i. 1, says, "The apostle here calls the elders bishops; for at that time these names were used in common, and a bishop was called διακονος, a minister." In confirmation of the remark that the terms, presbyter and bishop, were applicable to the same person, he refers to Titus i. 5, 7, where the apostle interchanges these terms. "It afterwards became the practice," he adds, "to appropriate each of these terms to a different person."

Theodoret (†457) makes a similar declaration in his interpretation of Phil. i. 1. The apostle, he says, "here calls the elders, bishops; for, at that time, they had both these names. And this," he continues, "the history of the Acts teaches us." He then produces Acts xx. 17, 28, where these two words are applied to the same persons, and refers to Titus i. 5, 7. He adds, "It is evident that he gives the name bishops to the presbyters."

Gieseler shows also that this view of the original identity of bishops and presbyters was long retained. It is found in writings bearing the dates of 1088, 1091,

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1428, and even so low as 1563, and 1570. "Since no value was set, during the middle ages, on the distinction between the *institutio divina* and the *institutio ecclesiastica*, ecclesiastical practice could not disturb that view. But after the Council of Trent (1563) had declared that bishops succeeded to the place of the apostles and were superior to presbyters, the old view became suspicious, and the *institutio divina* of episcopacy and its original distinction from presbyteratus became the general doctrine of the Catholic church which the English Episcopalians also followed in this particular, while the other Protestant churches returned to the most ancient doctrine."

XVII. Page 131, Ch. III., Part II.

CHANGE IN THE MUTUAL RELATION OF MINISTERS AFTER THE TIME OF THE APOSTLES.

It is not difficult to see how the primitive identity of presbyters and bishops may have become modified, so that at an early period it yielded to diversity of orders, or ranks, in the ministry.

Among the elders, that is, presbyters, in any given

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church, some one might have become distinguished by his knowledge, or practical wisdom, or ability in public discourse, or regarded with special respect on account of his age, and been treated as superior to his associates. He might have been selected as a temporary head of the eldership, and subsequently as a permanent head, and might have become regarded as eminently *the* teacher and guide of the church, as perhaps a chief of the elders, the one on whom, more than on the others, responsibility rested. The transition would not be a violent one, in the succeeding decade of years, certainly, not in the next generation, to an official superiority being accorded to a person thus situated. The position, regarded at first as simply that of *a chief among equals*, (primus inter pares,) might easily be changed into that of a permanent official elevation of one presbyter over the others, and of his being denominated *the bishop* and alone bearing this name, while the others continued to be known by the name of presbyters.

This change in the mutual relation of presbyters occurred, doubtless, very soon after the apostolic age. Neander, in his Planting and Training of the Church, p. 92, observes, "It is certain that every church [in

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the apostolic age] was governed by a union of the elders, or overseers, chosen from among themselves; and we find among them no individual distinguished above the rest who presided as a *primus inter pares;* though probably in the age immediately succeeding the apostolic, of which we have unfortunately so few authentic memorials, the practice was introduced to apply to such a person the name of επισκοπος [bishop] by way of distinction. We have no information how the office of president in the deliberations of presbyters was held in the apostolic age.* Possibly this office was held in rotation; or the order of seniority might be followed; or by degrees one individual by his personal qualifications might gain such a distinction. All this, in the absence of information, must be left undetermined. One thing is certain; that the person who acted as president was not yet [in the apostolic age] distinguished by any particular name." †

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* Query. Was such an office at that time necessary?

† Neander's view is far preferable to the too particular statement of Mosheim in his Commentaries on the affairs of the Christians, vol. I. p. 169, Murdock's edition. Mosheim says, the distinguishing of one of the presbyters in a church was done by the churches themselves, "selecting and placing

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In his Church History, vol. i. pp. 190, 192, Neander gives also the following view: "What we find existing in the second century enables us to infer, respecting the preceding times, that soon after the apostolic age the standing office of a president of the presbytery must have been formed: which president, as having preëminently the oversight over all, was designated by the special name of ἐπισκοπος [bishop] and thus distinguished from the other presbyters. Thus the name came at length to be applied exclusively to this presbyter, while the name *presbyter* continued at first to be common to all; for the bishops, as presiding

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at the head of the council of presbyters, some one man of eminent wisdom and prudence, whose peculiar duty it should be to allot to his colleagues their several tasks, and by his advice and every other mode of assistance to prevent, as far as in him lay, the interests of the assembly, over which he was thus appointed to preside, from experiencing any kind of detriment or injury." Such a man, he thinks, was at first designated by the title *angel of the church* (Rev. ii. 1) over which he presided.

But it may well be asked, on what ground can it be so definitely said that this selection was made by the church, rather than by the presbyters themselves? or, that the primitive presbyters needed such direction and supervision?

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presbyters, had no official character other than that of the presbyters generally. They were only *primi inter pares*" [first among equals].

"This relation of the bishops to the presbyters we may observe all along to the end of the second century. It is hence that Irenæus sometimes uses the names *bishop* and *presbyter* as wholly synonymous, and at others distinguishes the bishops, as presiding officers, from the presbyters. Tertullian, also, calls the presiding offices of the Christian communities by the common name of Seniores, including under this title both bishops and presbyters; though, elsewhere in the writings of this father, the distinction between bishops and presbyters is already decidedly drawn. In many respects, Tertullian may be considered as standing on the boundary line between an old and a new era in the Christian church."

The original equality, in point of office, among the elders in a church was thus disturbed by the elevation of one of their number to a primacy in their body, who became *the bishop* of that church and of his fellow-presbyters. "A primitive bishop," as Mosheim observes in his Commentaries on the affairs of the Christians, Vol. 1. p. 174, "was none other than the

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chief, or principal, minister of an individual church." He performed the duties which are now, for substance, ordinarily performed by a pastor, and had associates in the ministry whose services he could employ as circumstances might require.

Different as was a primitive bishop from a modern diocesan, in that he was, strictly speaking, the principal pastor of a church, it requires but little reflection to see how his position could ere long be converted into, or prepare the way for, that of a diocesan.

Churches, generally, were first gathered in cities. When they became prosperous and, through their influence, Christian congregations were formed in the neighboring villages or country, these smaller congregations would naturally cherish the feeling of relation to the original city-church, to its elders and particularly to its chief elder. The elders who ministered to these neighboring congregations, whether sent from the city-church, or selected from among themselves, would also cherish an attachment to the original church. The dependence of these congregations on that church would mingle with a feeling of inferiority and, perhaps, subjection to it, unless instructions on this point were given. Thus the official superintendence of the chief

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elder, or bishop, of the city church would become extended: and, gradually, such a man, in a very distinguished city, might come to be regarded with a distinction corresponding to that which his city held in civil respects. Accordingly, a metropolitan bishop might be held in higher honor, and have a wider ecclesiastical oversight, than bishops in other cities of the province.

Besides the formation of new churches in the vicinity of a city, a similar process would be going on in the city itself; so that convenience, or necessity, would require several places of worship for various parts of the original church. Yet these parts, generally, might retain a connection with the original body, as dependent on it, or preferring to be under its oversight. Every such extension of ecclesiastical limits might be an equal extension of the bishop's official care.

It deserves, also, to be mentioned, as contributing to the respect which would be paid to a distinguished bishop in a church, and to the extension of his ecclesiastical influence, that in the vexations and persecutions to which the early Christians were exposed, and in which the inferior magistrates would be indisposed to furnish them relief, such a man could, at times,

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through his interest with some high civil officers, or through pecuniary means, or influence over comparatively wealthy Christians, avert, or mitigate, calamities. Such circumstances, conspiring with a general tendency of thought favorable to official distinctions — a very important consideration — would possess much force.

Then, again, as promoting clerical distinctions, the insidious nature of ambition and of worldly policy, even among good men, must not be forgotten.

But that any such distinctions, as we are now contemplating, existed in the earliest times, or are the necessary growth of apostolic arrangements, cannot be made to appear. They were the growth of circumstances operating on human wisdom, and shaping human views of expediency, in the absence of authoritative guidance. They originated, imperceptibly, in slight deviations from apostolic precedents: and it is, therefore, not wonderful that they cannot be so accurately traced as our inquisitiveness would desire.

Whether official distinctions among Christian ministers may be justified on the ground of expediency, or are rendered necessary by the wide spread of the gospel, is an inquiry which would be variously answered

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according to diversity of mental habits and associations. It is evident, however, from the cautions of our Lord to his primitive ministers, the apostles, that such distinctions among his servants are unsuitable: and the experience of centuries, since his ascension, supplies strong arguments against a departure from primitive symplicity and equality.

XVIII. Pages 6–7, Ch. IV., Part II.

ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM BY OTHERS THAN MINISTERS.

While regularity might require, in ordinary circumstances, the limitation of this service to ministers, the deacons of a church, that is, the elders who are not pastors, might, when occasion should require, administer baptism without violation of a Scripture rule, or of the spirit of Christianity, and without violating the decorum which the gospel requires.

When, also, an exigency arises, as in the case of Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, and in supposable cases, it is to be met *as an exigency*, and

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disposed of in a wise and conscientious manner. In such cases, the spirit of Christianity should dictate the mode of proceeding. While a prescribed duty is to be honored in its observance, the questions of time, and place, and agents, are subordinate. Christianity is not a system of ceremonies, but of vital principles. The idea of official sanctity, or of the necessity that a religious act be performed by official hands in order to be acceptable to God and valuable to men, has no place in the New Testament. If, indeed, baptism were appointed as indispensable to the remission of sins, then great care would be requisite, that the act should be performed with punctilious exactness by a man holding a certain relative position, or to whom some undefinable influence had been imparted, that it might accompany his official acts. But, as baptism is mainly declaratory on the part of the person baptized that he has become a disciple of Christ, and that, as such, it is his purpose henceforth to lead a holy life, the whole design of baptism, sacred as the rite is, is answered, by whomsoever administered, if there be a just sense of its intent on the part of him who is baptized.

The case of Roger Williams, above alluded to, is

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stated in the following manner by Prof. Knowles in his Memoir of Mr. Williams, chapter xiii. "Mr. Williams was a clergyman of the Church of England: and when he became convinced of his duty to be baptized, there was no other minister in New England who would have baptized him, had he made application. The most obvious expedient in the circumstances was adopted. Mr. Holliman was selected to baptize Mr. Williams, who then baptized the administrator and ten others."

XIX. Page 143, Ch. IV., Part II.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, WHETHER BELONGING DISTINCTIVELY TO THE OFFICE OF A MINISTER.

If it be asked, whether the administration of the Lord's supper does not, as much as that of baptism, belong distinctively to the office of a minister, it may be replied, that parity of reason, particularly in reference to regularity, would seem to require this. Still, the New Testament contains nothing which thus lim-

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its it. The language of our Lord's commission to the apostles is noticeable: He directs them to disciple and baptize the nations, and to teach those who are baptized to observe all things which he had commanded. The Lord's supper was, doubtless, included among the things which the disciples should be taught to observe; but no intimation is given in regard to the persons who should preside on such occasions. It may then be questioned whether it does not differ in this particular from baptism; and whether it is not more properly viewed as of the nature of a devout social meal in commemoration of Christ.

This is, perhaps, to be explained by the relation which these ordinances hold, respectively, to the cause of Christ. Baptism marks the entrance of a person into discipleship to Christ, or his assuming the Christian profession: the Lord's supper denotes his continued adherence to Christ, and union with Christ's people. According to notices respecting them in the New Testament, baptism is the more important of the two, as to its position, being a transition act: just as the act of admission to citizenship, on the part of an immigrant, is more important than acts of continued citizenship, as being the transition from alienship to

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citizenship and the indispensable condition to the series of citizens' acts. It is not surprising, then, that more particular mention is made, in the New Testament, of baptism than of the Lord's supper. And if we regard the Lord's supper as a social Christian ordinance, designed, not so much for presenting divine truth to the public, as for benefiting the disciples themselves, maintaining an ever fresh remembrance of their Lord, and binding themselves together as joint partakers of faith and hope in Him, and if, therefore, it be properly regarded as a comparatively retired observance, there would be no incongruity in any grave member of a church superintending it in the absence of a minister. Still, Christian propriety requires, as a general rule, that it be superintended by a minister, particularly by the pastor. According to Acts xx. 11, the apostle Paul, after preaching, administered the Lord's supper. It would seem natural that *he* should do this, as holding so grave and affectionate a relation to believers in Christ, that everywhere Christian feeling would instinctively place him at the head of the table.

It is worthy of inquiry, whether the displacing of baptism from its proper position, as the public avowal of a personal reception of the gospel — a result of

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infant-baptism — has not occasioned an injurious transfer of this part of its significance to the Lord's supper, and invested the latter, not perhaps with too much, but with disproportionate, importance.

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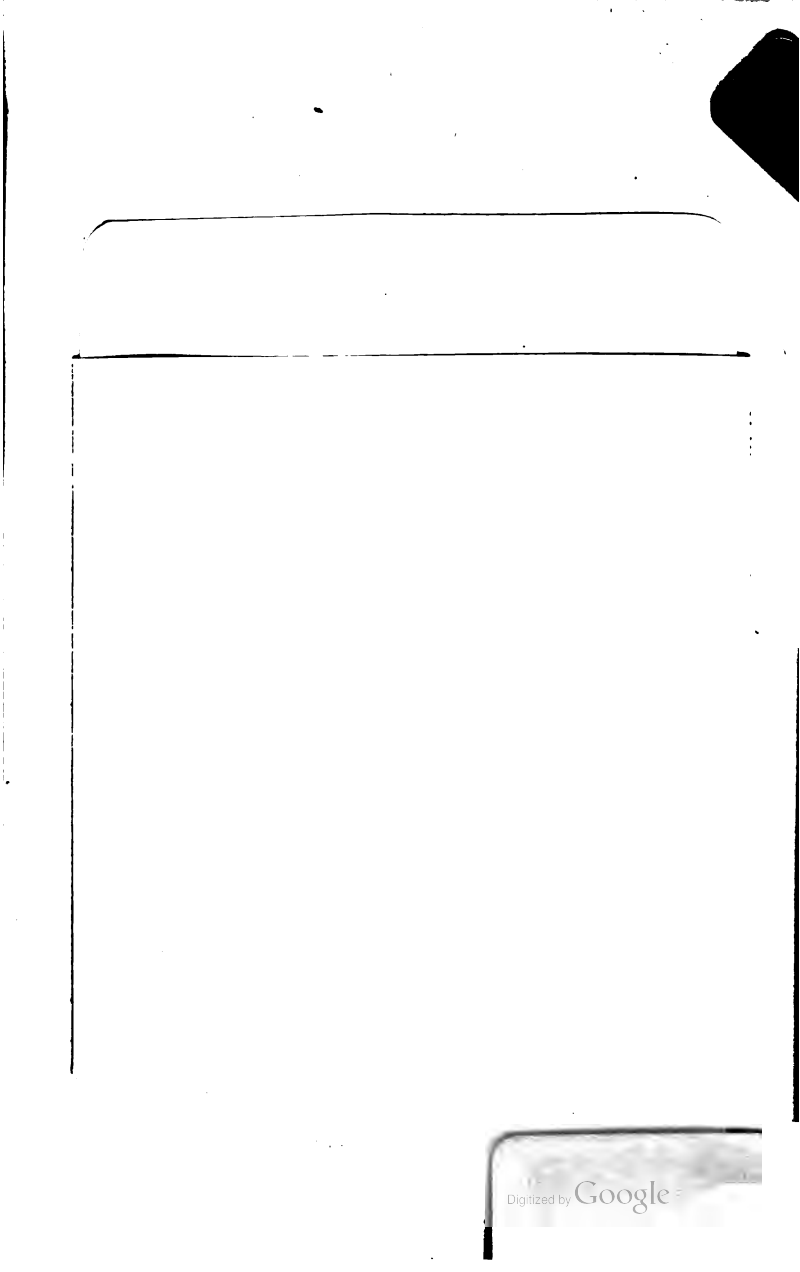
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